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THE CRITICAL PRINCIPLES OF ORESTES A. BROWNSON

BY

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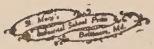

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PREFACE

The material for this study of Brownson's critical principles consists of his essays on topics pertaining to literature and art. These essays first appeared in the pages of *Brownson's Quarterly Review*. In the edition of Brownson's *Works* compiled by his son, they constitute volume xix, which is entitled *Literary Essays*. Two or three critical essays found in volume xx of the collected *Works* tend merely to confirm the opinions expressed in the *Literary Essays,* and the references to Brownson's views in this dissertation have therefore been confined to the latter volume. These references are indicated in the body of the dissertation by giving in parenthesis the respective page numbers and the volume number, xix.

Brownson's writings have been chosen as a subject for study because they are always thought-inspiring even when consent to the opinions expressed in them cannot be given, because they lend themselves admirably to thorough treatment, and because their almost total neglect at present, in striking contrast to the wide notice that was accorded them formerly, seems to indicate a rather undeserved fate.

For anyone interested in Brownson, the first part of this dissertation, which is expository, will be of greater interest than the second part, if not of sole interest. For the writer and his purpose, however, the second part, which is a destructive and constructive criticism of the first, is far more important; and therefore it takes up the larger portion of the dissertation.

The bibliography on Brownson aims at being complete and omits only the many encyclopedia articles in various languages, and the many books that contain little more than a reference to him in one form or another. The second section of the bibliography includes only the works that were directly suggestive in the formulation of the writer's views.

The writer wishes to express his appreciation of the patient and scholarly guidance of Professor P. J. Lennox, under whom he performed his major work at the University and wrote this dissertation.

CONTENTS

PART I

EXPOSITORY

CHAPTER I.—LITERARY PRINCIPLES 7
1.—Literature and Its Mission 7
2.—The Sociological Conception of Literature 10
3.—The Author 18
4.—Poetry, the Novel, and History 21
5.—Criticism 26
CHAPTER II.—AESTHETIC PRINCIPLES 28
1.—Idea of Art and Aesthetics 28
2.—The Beautiful 29
3.—The Artist 32
4.—Philosophy of the Beautiful 34
CHAPTER III.—ONTOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES 37

PART II

CRITICAL

CHAPTER IV.—CRITIQUE OF THE ONTOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES 43
CHAPTER V.—CRITIQUE OF THE AESTHETIC PRINCIPLES 48
1.—Viewpoints in Art 48
2.—The Artistic Activity 49
3.—Art in Its Effect 61
4.—The Good, the True, and the Beautiful 70
CHAPTER VI.—CRITIQUE OF THE LITERARY PRINCIPLES 77
1.—Literature 77
2.—The Sociological Conception of Literature 83
3.—The Author 87
4.—Poetry, the Novel, and History 89
5.—Criticism 97
CONCLUSION 101
BIBLIOGRAPHY 103

PART I

EXPOSITORY

CHAPTER I

LITERARY PRINCIPLES

1.—Literature and Its Mission

A direct statement of the principles on which Brownson based his literary criticisms is not to be found in his writings; else the effort expended in these pages would be superfluous. But no critic can pass judgment on works of art, literary or otherwise, to any great extent, without writing sentence after sentence which indirectly at least points to the standard fixed in his mind. Of course, such statements, being applications to some individual, specific work, cannot stand singly as adequate utterances of general principles. On account of the different viewpoints from which they were pronounced, they might appear to contain contradictions rather emphatic; but these are greatly toned down when the various statements are taken as a whole and considered in their context as they naturally should be. It is from statements of this sort that we must ascertain what was Brownson's ideal of literature. Given this ideal, the merit of any single specimen depends on the extent to which it conforms with, or approaches, the model. Thus an exposition of the principles of criticism adopted by Brownson resolves itself into an elaboration of his idea of what true literature and true art should be.

When we speak of ideal qualities to which every piece of literature should conform, this does not mean that there is an absolute ideal of literature in actual existence. A piece of literature indeed has an entity of its own, and can be considered apart from all else; but in reality it is closely connected with its suroundings, with humanity, with the world at large, and cannot be properly judged apart from these. There is then, according to Brownson, no 'general literature, which teaches nothing special' (xix 205). Such a literature is as unreal as is man without men and the human race without individuals. (*Ibid.*) Hence literature is always specific and means something that is 'specifically related to man as a moral, religious, or social being'

(xix 205). And this must always be held in mind by the critic if he wishes to arrive at an adequate judgment concerning any piece of writing.

Literature therefore should not be considered apart from its surroundings. It should never be sought for its own sake (xix 208); in fact, not even for the sake of the 'pleasures of wit, taste, and imagination it may bring.' (*Ibid.*) Works that have no end beyond that of satisfying the literary taste of readers are not worthy of the labor of the critic (xix 364). These are rather hard words. They seem to call for direct instruction in literature, and therefore need some modification or explanation. Brownson concedes well enough that the aim of literature is primarily to please and not to instruct. Works that aim principally at instruction are the professional works of the sciences, and these are not included under the denomination of polite literature, or belles-lettres (xix 493). The latter, though specific, must address not one specific class of men, but rather the 'common sentiments of all cultivated readers.' (*Ibid.*) Poetry in particular, and under this term in a general way is included the novel, has as its first object to move and to please (xix 226). And the writer who uses it primarily for conveying instruction or defending doctrines is destroying the proper relation between content and form in art (*Ibid.*); he is exceeding the purpose of the medium which he employs. Still there should be instruction in all literature; but it is to be conveyed in the manner in which, for instance, the symphonies of Beethoven are said to be instructive (xix 304). If a more direct instruction is sought, even this must be very general, of the kind that will appeal to persons who differ widely in their individual views (xix 304). Always, however, must it be remembered that mankind in general refuses instruction unless it is given in a pleasing form (xix 366); and that a chief purpose of popular literature is to afford pleasure and recreation during 'hours of weariness and relaxation from severer labors or studies' (xix 588).

Form, therefore, the garb in which the writer dresses his thought, is of great importance; and never should it be considered a matter of indifference (xix 366). In fact, the more beautiful and appropriate the form is, the more commendable is the work (xix 213). Even from a religious or moral stand-

point is this true. Everything that is worth doing is certainly worth doing well; and an author has no right at all 'to send out a literary production, great or small, without having made it as perfect in its kind as possible in his circumstances' (xix 213). Both the moral and the literary viewpoint condemn productions that are crude and hasty. (*Ibid.*) In the matter of rendering his work as appropriately beautiful as possible, the author has free rein; no restriction is laid on him (xix 213). Still, important as the form is, it cannot be considered the be-all and end-all of literature. Works considered from the standpoint of form alone, as mere 'literary productions,' have no value (xix 318).

If then the purpose of the writer is not merely to create a work of art (xix 68), the question naturally arises: What end must he have in view in producing a piece of literature? Literature, answers Brownson, is a form of human activity; it is 'the exponent of the life and character of the people who produce it' (xix 497), the expression of man's interior life (xix 267), and can therefore have no end except one that is in accordance with the true end of man (xix 68). This, indeed, is the only restriction imposed upon an author, that his motive be one which subserves the great and solemn purpose of man's existence (xix 213). No matter how high the literary merits of a production may be, it cannot be commended if it inculcates a false doctrine or is unwholesome in its tendency (xix 104). But this principle is not merely a deduction from the fact that literature is a form of human activity and is therefore subject to the laws that guide the latter. Literature should be considered not only in its origin, but much more in its last stage, in the goal at which its activity consciously or unconsciously arrives. It must be considered, therefore, in its influence, and thus it reveals itself as a power that will exert a strong effect for good or for evil (xix 460). Literature develops the energy of the soul, elevates sentiments, and broadens views (xix 22), if applied rightly; and if not, its influence on man is equally pernicious. In no sense can it be claimed that literature is independent of all moral, social, and religious doctrines except in purely mental abstraction. Persons that try to give concrete entity to this abstraction, to pure literature as such, making it a kind of Platonic idea that exists independent of the ethical or social conditions that surround every activity of

man, are very much in error. Letters, therefore, cannot but have reference to man as a moral, social being, and to the relations of man to man and to his Maker (xix 205).

This fact being established, the writer must always take into consideration the effect his production will have on mankind. The effect will be there whether he wills it or not. And as this effect may be bad as well as good, may be prejudicial to the well-being of mankind, a disregard of it can be a crime against humanity, not to mention the intrinsic ethics of such an act of omission. The influence, therefore, wielded by every production of the literary artist gives to literature a mission to perform, and this mission can be no other than to inculcate in the hearts and minds of men those things which it is necessary for them to know for their moral, social, and religious betterment (xix 210); 'to cultivate the secular element of individual and social life' (xix 303); in other words, the advance of society.

2.—The Sociological Conception of Literature

The last words of the preceding paragraph contain the undercurrent of all that Brownson says, or thinks it worth while to say, on literature. From his very youth on, almost from the time when he began to think, the question of the condition of man and of men here on earth occupied a foremost place of interest in his mental speculations. Later on, when he became more active in the world, he was ever known as a social reformer, one who continually worked towards the amelioration of the masses. He saw in literature the only way of reaching the minds of the people at large; he noticed only too frequently what were the evil influences of all types of literature when they were imbued with false notions of life, even if these were remote from the intentions or the consciousness of the writers; he realized most keenly what a tremendous power for the good of mankind literature could be turned into—and to him it seemed preposterous to consider literature in any other light than that of an instrument for the improvement of the human race. The sociological conception of literature was to him the only tenable one, it was the supreme consideration.

Of course there is the ethical and religious side of the life, which cannot be neglected either by individual or by society.

But the direct inculcation of a sound morality is a matter of more immediate instruction, while correct social principles can often be implanted or propagated only through the medium of literature. There is indeed such a close connection between literature and society that without the latter the former would not exist. If men were not social beings, were not united by common bonds; if each individual were a solitary, isolated being: there would be no purport in the production of a piece of literature, it could have no meaning. Again if there were not a social element in the individual man, a feeling of fellowship with other men and therefore a strong sympathy for all things human, literature would be an empty bubble; there would be no one to appreciate it, it would have no raison d'être. But the relation of society to literature is a closer one than this. The relation on the part of society is not merely that of a sort of condition necessary for the existence of literature.

If, as we have already said, literature is the expression of the life of man, the exposition of the 'sentiments, convictions, aims, and ideals' of a people (xix 101), the embodiment or expression of the national life (xix 4, 15, 20); then this life of the people naturally stands somewhat in the relation of cause to the literature produced. The latter is born out of the spirit of the age; it arises to meet a great want, to solve 'great moral, philosophical, or social problems' (xix 16, 20, 29). A brief survey of the history of the world's literature suffices to show this more clearly. Everywhere and in all epochs do we find that no literature arose except when changes in society, even revolutions, had taken place, when some kind of fermentation had been going on in the life of society (xix 30). Consult the literature of the Hebrews and their political changes, the period of literary glory at Athens and her political and philosophical changes, the age of Augustus and the fermentations just preceding it, the work of Dante and Tasso and the republican struggles at Rome, the great period of English literature and the struggles between Catholicism and Protestantism, France and the state politics of Louis XIV., the great epoch of German literature—everywhere is apparent a condition of social or political fermentation resulting in changes (xix 30-33); and such changes necessitate a readjustment of ideas, produce new sentiments that crave utterance, new problems that must be solved. (*Ibid.*)

Thus the fallacy of the statement becomes evident that a literature is created by a few great men (xix 16). It is not true that Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Spencer, Pope, or Johnson are strictly the creators of English literature; no, they themselves are created by the spirit of their age and their nation. (*Ibid.*) 'Great men do not make their age; they are its effect.' (*Ibid.*) Therefore only such writers as are affected by the spirit of the fermenting movements really help towards the existence of a literature (xix 30). They alone will become popular, since it is their spirit that is agitating also the masses; they alone will be the real writers of their age, since the popular acceptation of a work is an indispensable requisite of true literature (xix 30). In fact, literature possesses real value just in proportion to the extent to which it enters the popular mind and forms an integral part of a people's life (xix 15). This is indeed its final test. It is not surprising, therefore, we can conclude by way of a corollary, that the Americans have produced no great literature. American scholars know not where to seek properly for their inspiration; they study English literature instead of the human mind. American literature will come when the American people are facing great issues, which they are seeking to solve (xix 19, 27).

The proper conception of literature becomes particularly important in the nineteenth century because all the classes now demand literature, and because it is just the social question that is the one of ever growing interest and importance. 'Literature, in the progress of events, has become a power, and one of the mightiest powers of our times' (xix 22). In the mind of man for the last decades a revolution has been going on in favor of the oppressed classes. It shows itself everywhere. It is to be seen even in the tendency of our language, which cannot but answer the wants of the people, and has departed far from the Latinized diction of Johnson in favor of Anglo-Saxon words (xix 50, 51, 53). Literature springs up from the needs of society; but in its turn it also exerts a powerful influence on the latter, as we have already mentioned. Hence there is a constant alternation here of cause and effect. This does not mean that society and literature follow each other in a circle, for that would preclude all progress on the part of society, whereas the human race should proceed constantly in forward motion. It

is in this general progress of man, tending ever higher and higher, that literature has its fixed place, which it cannot escape. If it does not realize its true position, fulfill its purpose in the sphere of life; if it exerts a lowering influence on the human race: the latter in turn becomes ever less fit for what is ennobling, and so the movement goes ever downward (xix 22, 268, 269).

From the intimate connection between literature and society and from the growing unrest and the unsettled condition of the question of classes among men follows an important duty of literature, since the latter deals specifically with life and the various problems of it that are uppermost in the minds of the people. Where so great a part is played in the progress of the human race, a great responsibility also results. Literature, in speaking of life, cannot but treat also of the relations between men and between classes of men; and these relations must be treated in the light in which they will promote the well-being of the human race. Labor, therefore, should always receive its proper dignity; a sympathy must be felt for all classes of men, public opinion corrected where wrong and led on where right, etc. (xix 11, 86). But we cannot continue in this strain. It is not by dogmatic statements that literature produces its effects, but rather by the seed implanted unconsciously in the mind of the reader. 'The tone and spirit of a book intended for the people is the main thing.....It is the unconscious life of the author diffused through the work, and which he could not avoid diffusing through it, if he would, that determines its influence for good or evil' (xix 134).

This silent influence literature possesses in common with all other productions that claim to be artistic and try to express the higher order of beauty (xix 339). The impelling power of a work of art is due to the appeal it makes to mankind. This appeal is not to be had from beauty of form alone, and each work must contain something beyond that exerts the desired influence. There should be first of all an atmosphere of genial human nature, 'a gushing human heart,' pervading every literary production (xix 19). Life, of course, has its evil side, its misery and gloom; but these have no right of monopoly in a work of art. There is already in literature too much of melancholy and despair, of images of 'vice, crime, and horror,' of 'the

frightful Ha! Ha! of the maniac,' of sympathy for the criminal and vicious characters just because they are criminal and vicious (xix 55, 151, 152, 263). This has a most deleterious effect on the heart of man; it may indeed appeal to his lower nature, but never to his higher sense of beauty, and cannot elevate the mind. It is terrible rather than beautiful and leaves no aspirations to anything higher (xix 49, 339): it does not uplift and therefore runs counter to the purpose of all art. Of course such facts are not excluded from art, but they do not constitute its essence. 'Old Chaucer,' for instance, who really belonged to 'Merry England,' may have had his grave faults; but in him the proper balance was always preserved—there was always 'hope of the heart that can laugh out and overflow with mirth' (xix 151). All literature, even the most trivial, should not teem with a 'morbid sentimentality,' but rather be joyous, healthy, and free. It should charm; it should give us a sympathy for our fellowmen; we should rise from it, not soured, misanthropic, but full of high and noble aspirations (xix 49, 55, 65, 153). The writer, indeed, 'who puts us in good humor with ourselves and with the world,' truly works for the uplift of society; virtue may lead to happiness, but it is equally true that real happiness leads to virtue (xix 54, 64). If literature is not imbued with this higher beauty that ennobles the heart of man, where is the recreation or comfort in reading it? A depressing of the spirit is no true relaxation (xix 151).

If true literature finds its test in the degree in which it strikes a responsive chord in human nature, it is necessary to discern clearly what the true side of human nature is. Man is essentially rational; and the test will therefore not be passed if an appeal is made to what is lowest in human nature, or even to what is not necessarily bad but still too human. There is a class of literature that addresses itself 'to the tastes of the mob,' that is written specifically to flatter the ordinary man, that tries to turn the earthly into the celestial and make a god of man (xix 189, 218). But this is a perversion of the true order of things and is contrary to the higher truth of nature. Literature, indeed, must raise itself above the popular instincts or convictions (xix 77); it must conform in some degree to the sentiments common to human nature, to the universal mind, for these 'embrace what goes ordinarily under the name of

common sense, good sense, taste, or good taste' (xix 493). It is the speculative philosopher as such who can see that these common sentiments and universal mind contain 'an intuition of an ideal that transcends human nature, that transcends all created nature,' and that is identical with the highest True, the highest Good, and the highest Beautiful (xix 494). However, as the discussion of this lies in the province of philosophy as such, the literary artist does not concern himself with it. Without asking further questions, he looks merely to the ideal of human nature for his inspiration, to the sentiments common to mankind. (*Ibid.*)

The life therefore which literature expresses must be of a higher order, must be idealized, though always conceived on the basis of human nature. Nor does this mean that only a part of life is fit to be embodied in literature, not at all. Literature should paint nature or society as it is; it should contain 'truth truthfully told' (xix 515). There is a school of writers which 'piques itself on painting life as it actually is, which eschews the ideal and whatever tends to elevate the soul, or to inspire high and noble aspirations' (xix 573). But it really paints the disgusting side of life as if that alone existed, as if that were the only real side of life. The depravity of life could have been painted just as readily and more truthfully in a different manner; thus, namely, that the effect would be uplifting rather than depressing, that it would tend 'to heal, instead of deepening and perpetuating the running sores of individuals and society (xix 263). This is what the ideal nature requires: the proper correlation of the aspects of life, not the highest perfection imaginable. A character, for instance, that is all-perfect, is actually imperfect and not true to nature (xix 261). Such a method of idealizing should be relegated to a world that is purely ideal, to the upper regions of the air, where it belongs (xix 262).

From the viewpoit of the mission of literature, too, it becomes paramount that literature impart no false views of life. Young people should learn to know life as they will find it in reality; to know what it is that elevates and that debases in real life (xix 261, 262). They should be taught to sympathize with their unfortunate brethren, with the miserable and abject; even with the corrupt, though not, of course, with corruption itself. (*Ibid.*) Similarly the life depicted should not be the

eccentric, or even that which is peculiar to any one nation alone. National idiosyncrasies make literature less prefect (xix 214); as do the limitations to any one peculiar place and time. Literature should express what is true at all times and at all places; the local coloring and the individuality should not be sought expressly; they will come if any production answers the peculiar conditions that gave rise to it (xix 215). The 'prince of literature' is 'he, who is truest to the common and universal human nature,' and expresses what is as applicable to one age or one people as to another, as we can see from the homage all men render to Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, and Goethe, for instance (xix 105, 494). All of life therefore should be not only the subject-matter but also the inspiration of literature, for 'in all things, even the most common and trivial, as well as in the most extraordinary and grand there is an ideal element, something divine,....in the lowest there is something not low, in the familiar something elevated and noble, in the transitory something permanent, in the changing something immutable, in the homely something beautiful' (xix 424).

Brownson had been born and brought up in a region where the religious question was in a state of great fluctuation, and where the solving of it was a matter of daily speculation. The air was charged with religious discussion. Brownson himself spent many years in an active search for truth in this sphere, and passed through a number of religious beliefs in his all-important quest. The matter occupied at least as much of his time and energy as did that of social conditions; and if we do not say that he considered it more important than the latter, this is due to the close interrelation of the two in his mind. He considered them almost identical. He sought his solution of the relation of class to class, and of the oppressed condition of the lower classes, in his theory of the universe and its relation to the Creator. Therefore, since literature is so prominently a sociological fact, it has the same close connection with the religious fact that the social question has; or rather, literature, like the social and every other question, finds its proper solution only in its relation to the all-important religious question.

How great therefore is the illusion of popular writers who believe that reason alone is judge in literature, science, and politics; that in these spheres the theological aspect can be absolute-

ly ignored (xix 265). Applied to literature this is 'literary atheism'; and, like political atheism which proclaims that the state need consider nothing higher than reason or nature, it is to be condemned as 'false both to God and man' (xix 266, 449). Of course the 'purely literary or artistic merit' of works written from this viewpoint is not to be denied, nor the genius, learning, ability, or skill of the writer to be condemned, for these are good in themselves (xix 448). As mere literature, productions may be altogether unexceptionable; but if they are false in substance, wrong in their tendency, they offend against the normal order and have no right of existence or indulgence (xix 214, 448). They are opposed to the higher order of truth, and in so far inartistic. The only literature that Christian society should recognize is a Christian literature; no other should be tolerated (xix 214).

Hence the principles which should guide the literary artist in his special field should indeed be theological, but only in so far as these influence also every phase of human life. His principles should simply be those which guide him in all other activities of his life—'in politics, business, and amusement' (xix 450, 451, 264). In the ontological order the church of God precedes reason and nature; the latter 'are subsequent to her;' this is the only correct position of reason and nature, and thus alone is reason able to discern real truth, to behold 'truth in its unity and catholicity' (xix 264, 450). These words must not be understood to mean that no scope of development is permitted to nature, that literature must be a kind of 'spiritual reading' (xix 449). Not at all. The whole principle of religion is rather a negative one (xix 253, 451). A literary production is free to display only natural sentiments and virtues, to rest entirely on natural principles in the true sense, and is only bound not to oppose religion and morality. Grace, in fact, does not change nature, but works along the lines of nature (xix 449, 450). No one is at liberty to deny the merit of works resting on true nature alone; and the works even of infidel and pagan countries contain much that is commendable and of great worth (xix 329).

The aim of literature, therefore, as far as religious ideals are concerned, is not to work directly towards the advancement of spiritual life, but only indirectly. Negative merit in this

respect is all that can be demanded. 'The office of popular literature is not precisely to spiritualize, but to civilize a people.' Theological principles then come into play rather as silent guides in advancing Christian civilization, 'in cultivating all the courtesies and amenities of civilized life' (xix 253, 301, 451). This aim, far from obtruding religion *ex professo* into literature, rather excludes anything that would provoke controversy and bitter feeling. (*Ibid.*) Such matter should be left to treatises professedly on religion.

From what has thus been said in a general way, the Catholic reviewer or writer can readily see the path he is to take. A Catholic must condemn all literary works that contain anything offensive to the teachings or the spirit of his church (xix 100, 103). He should not on that account necessarily condemn altogether, for purely literary and artistic merits are judged by literary and artistic standards, which are independent of religion (xix 448). Again the Catholic writer knows from the above that he is not to urge his religion directly in his literary works. There are productions that seem to have been 'written on the principle, that they must be filled with arguments for the church, or have a good Catholic moral tacked on to the end' (xix 147). Such works are in reality not literary; they are using literature for the purposes of religious propaganda, hence under false pretences and against the purpose of all art. A book can be just as Catholic by omitting things as by parading dogmas, and the Catholic literary artist need only see that his work breathes a true Catholic soul, the genuine Christian spirit (xix 147, 136, 186). His books will then contain a charm and attraction for readers in general; they will appeal to all that is good and true in the heart of mankind and have true literary worth. (*Ibid.*)

3.—The Author

The intimate connection between literature and society naturally affects strongly the position of the writer with regard to his fellowmen. Society is made up of individuals; these all have their distinct parts to perform in the general aim or trend of society. The primary tendency of the human race is advancement, progress, and this is attainable only if the different

members perform different offices (xix 75). Hence there must be 'a diversity of gifts and callings.' Each man necessarily has his own mission to fulfill, and each one must work for the common advancement; otherwise the progress of humanity is an idle word, the human race will be at a standstill (xix 71, 76). 'Here is the broad and solid foundation of society and the social virtues,—on which society becomes, not a mere assemblage or aggregation of individuals, held together by that rope of sand, enlightened self-interest, but a living organism, with a common centre of life, and a common principle of vitality; a one body with many members, and all the members members one of another' (xix 71). This diversity of callings naturally implies a certain degree of inequality, which, however, is an indispensable necessity. Not all men can be in advance of the human race; that is absurd. It follows then that it devolves upon the few to be the leaders of their brethren. This is true of all spheres of activity, 'literary, scientific, military, political;' there are only a few that are specially adapted to solve the problems of the race, though the solution is for the benefit of all (xix 71, 74). Such is in fact the order of the world; it cannot be altered, and an attempt to change it results only in disaster: the mass of men is advanced only by individuals that have gone before; 'the few lead, the many are lead' (xix 75, 250, 448).

From this follows the grave duty of every writer to realize properly his position. An educated class is an absolute necessity; an aristocracy of learning cannot be dispensed with if the general intelligence of the people is to advance (xix 75, 99). But it is just this end that will be frustrated if writers look upon themselves as a class that is superior to the rest of mankind, as a class of privileged persons that exist for their own benefit (xix 75). Anyone that considers his own endowments as a purely 'personal luxury,' which he is to use for himself alone, is perverting the order of nature; he is not fulfilling his part in the general progress of society. The higher a person rises above ordinary men, the more is he obliged to work for the common welfare (xix 76, 87). He must ever remember that 'greatness is conferred not to be ministered unto, but to minister.' (*Ibid.*) Every writer must therefore have a full and proper conception of the great work to which his gifts call him. His

motives cannot be selfish; he must not seek his own advantage, but have fully in mind the high mission of literature and set himself towards accomplishing this. Nor is a general notion of this mission sufficient. It has already been said that literature does not deal in generalities, being always specific. Hence the writer, too, must have in mind the specific way in which he is to work towards this general mission (xix 70, 77). To this specific mission of his, determined as a rule by the needs of the age and country he lives in, he must apply himself with 'boldness, energy, and devotion,' with all his strength (xix 99, 87). He must leave nothing undone, fear no sacrifice, spare no enthusiasm in its accomplishment. He is a man who will 'break forth in song, strike such music from the human heart as shall tame savage beasts, and make the very stones assume shape and order in the walled city; or utter himself in fiery indignant eloquence that shall make senates thrill, nations upheave, tyrants look aghast, and monarchs put their hands to their heads to feel for their crowns; but all and always for some high and solemn purpose, some true and noble end, for which he counts it honorable to live, and sweet to die' (xix 67).

But given the realization of this high and noble aim, given the endowments, natural or acquired, that raise a man above the ordinary rank and file; we may be still very far from having a literary artist. The man that aspires to glory in the literary or artistic field must do more than study and know, more than cooly desire the accomplishment of his end (xix 326). Before he can do anything worth while, there must be veritably 'a necessity upon him,' else his efforts will be doomed to failure (xix 18-19). We see this in all the masterpieces of literature, ancient and modern; everywhere we see the great literary artists espousing some great cause—nay, possessed by it—and we see them successful just in proportion to the greatness of their cause and to the burning enthusiasm with which they were actuated in its accomplishment (xix 20). It is in this cause that the writer must find a real inspiration. There must be a craving, a soul 'swelling with great thoughts struggling for utterance,' a mind 'haunted by visions of beauty'—always towards the accomplishment of some end for which writing, literature, is indispensable as a means (xix 19). Then, and then only, will the result be real literature, real art. To such a degree

must his cause inspire and possess him that no doubts arise in his mind as to his own powers. Only when the writer is fully conscious of his own strength, when he has full confidence in his inspiration and his cause, so that he need not strive laboriously after effect, will he produce works of art that are worthy of admiration for their freshness and power (xix 26, 27). Unless he has a firm confidence in himself, and dares to set up entirely for himself, there will be lacking what is a requisite of of all true art, originality. The latter by no means implies that an author shall say only what was never uttered before—since that would almost preclude all possibility of being original. It means rather just what we have stated above, that the truths the writer expresses must come from the innermost depths of his heart, must have been 'really felt, thought, or lived' by him (xix 494-5).

In this inspiration, then, in this originality, do we find the touchstone of literature, as of all art. The artist that feels this first requisite in himself must strive to develop those qualities which are necessary towards attaining the noble mission of literature in general, and his own specific mission in particular. Only when he views human nature in its higher self, will he express that truth which is alone good and beautiful (xix 326). He must indeed learn to sympathize deeply with humanity in general; he must make the hopes and fears of the people and their yearnings his own (xix 17). At the same time he must remember that he may not cringe to the clamor of the masses, that he must be above the popular convictions (xix 77). Rather should he wed himself to great principles, imbue his heart and soul with all that is noble and true, be himself the impersonation of what mankind should strive for (xix 17, 38, 77). This, in fact, is the distinguishing mark of every real 'artist, whether painter or sculptor, poet or novelist' (xix 559).

4.—Poetry, the Novel, and History

We have now given in broad lines what Brownson considered the distinctive mission of all literature that aspires to the rank of art. This literature manifests itself under various forms, and these naturally have their own peculiar features. Strict prose is properly the language of the understanding, the ade-

quate vehicle of instruction; poetry, on the other hand, as a form of art, does not aim primarily to instruct, but rather to move and to please (xix 226). Hence all writings in prose form, that can be ranked as real art, must also partake of the nature of poetry; i. e., they must address themselves to the sense and the imagination as well as to the intellect and the heart (xix 424). Among these forms of prose that Brownson mentions directly are the novel and, to some extent, history.

Poetry is not merely a variety of artistic production, but actually stands at the head of all liberal arts; the poetic genius is unsurpassed in the natural order (xix 424). Poetry surpasses the other species of art because it is able to embody the sublime and the beautiful 'in the greatest variety of forms, or under the greatest variety of aspects.' Like them it addresses itself to the senses, but the truth or ideal it expresses is more within the grasp of the intellect than is the case with the other arts. (*Ibid.*) It is at least just as beautiful, and, in so far as it is more tangible, also more perfect. The essential of poetic form is rhythmical language (xix 338). Through this form the poet must express the true and the good as clearly as does the philosopher himself; but unlike the latter he must reveal them 'in their splendor, their grandeur, and their loveliness.'

However, the mere 'form of the sublime and the beautiful' in itself is not art; it must express also some content and can be used only to reveal, not to conceal thought (xix 424). In like manner is mere feeling without clear and distinct thought an empty bubble. Descriptions, too, that are introduced only for their own sake have no value; at their best they may betray a mood or viewpoint of the author, but they do not raise us above our ordinary surroundings (xix 338, 426, 427). The poet that thus describes for the mere sake of description gives us not the poetry of every-day life but this life itself; if he has an ideal in his mind, he has failed to give it exterior form (xix 425). It is just this poetry of every-day life that should be one of the noblest aims of the artist. We have already mentioned 'that in all things, even the most common and trivial, as well as in the most extraordinary and grand, there is an ideal element, something divine,—that in the lowest there is something not low, in the familiar something elevated and noble, in the transitory something permanent, in the changing something immutable,

in the homely something beautiful'—and this element it is especially 'the province of the poet to seize and embody in his verse' (xix 424).

If such is the essence of poetry, it follows that verse-forms containing only 'puerile conceits, flimsy sentiments,' are not included in the sphere of poetic art, no matter how well the line flows on and how harmonious the sound (xix 315). The same holds true if full, free rein is given to the 'extravagances of a wild and inconstant fancy.' That the poet must indeed feel, has been said often enough; and in so far as he must feel, is there need of spontaneity. However, that spontaneity is false which consists in blind passion, a rushing forth of the spirit no one knows whither. There must always be a kind of premeditation, or at least the silent guidance of those sound principles that above were demanded of every literary artist (xix 312-3, 315-6).

The novel is a prose form of literature; but it partakes of the nature of poetry and in so far its main purpose is 'to move and to please' rather than 'to enlighten and convince.' Any novel therefore that aims primarily to inculcate some theory or doctrine 'in an inartistic way,' i. e., directly and immediately, is objectionable (xix 225). In works of instruction repose is demanded, only the intellect is to be active; whereas novels demand action and are impatient to come to an end. The interest derived from a story is quite different from that engendered by logical discussion; the two are not compatible (xix 226).

As the novel is the most popular form of literature, it becomes specially important that its interest arise only from what is healthy and noble in the life and nature of man. And just here we touch upon the greatest abuse of this form of literature; for the sentimental, which is so often used as the bait in novels, is a dangerous means to employ. The sentiments are in themselves free from blame (xix 151); but it takes consumate skill to depict correctly, while anyone can pervert them. When perverted, they turn into morbid sentimentality, and are generally the source of corruption in man; they are in fact the mortal foe of real piety and strength of character (xix 145, 146, 151). Almost the same judgment must be passed on the use of love in our novels. Human love is of course a fact in life,

but one that is generally learned early enough; while in novels its portrayal is as a rule false, overwrought, and entirely independent of the faculty of reason (xix 241, 444-6). What was said in general before about false views of life, finds here its particular application. Nor does the sentimental afford a healthy relaxation to the spirit of man. Amusement, indeed, has its place and time, but it must ever be innocent and salutary (xix 151).

Morbid sentimentalism is always false, and hence cannot be justified even when combined with religious discussion, regardless of what some writers of the religious novel seem to think (xix 144, 146). The religious novel is peculiar, and partakes of two different natures. As a form of art it belongs to the sphere of art and is subject to the latter's laws. But being also religious, it is subject likewise to the laws of religion. Thus are combined two distinct species of art, the secular and the religious; and whereas the interest of the one is in the natural, that of the other is in the supernatural—and the result is a literary hybrid (xix 157, 227-8). Of course the natural and the supernatural are not in themselves incompatible. The former is always subject to the latter by nature. But just here is the crux of our question, since the main feature of interest in the religious novel is not the religious discussion in it but its story or its chaarcters (xix 165, 236-8). No matter from what point of view these novels are considered, they must be condemned as miserable failures. Since the action in them is mixed up with a good deal of religious discussion, they will disgust him who takes up the novels for the sake of the story; while he who takes them up for religious instruction will be diverted from his purpose by the story, which he will consider superfluous and a hindrance. Religious novels as a rule are 'wretchedly dull as novels, and miserably defective as theological treatises.' They are failures in either way, 'as offensive as a picture in which the painter joins the beautiful head of a maiden to the body of a fish,' and must be reckoned as a 'literary monstrosity,' indefensible both from the religious standpoint and from the artistic (xix 144-6, 157-8, 295, 299-300, 565-6). The novelist, therefore, should avoid whatever is dogmatic or controversial, and depend rather on the 'silent influence' of what he has written. If his work is imbued with a healthy

spirit, one that lifts the heart of the reader to the higher aspirations of the soul, excites in him real admiration for characters of true morality—it will be really and truly a religious novel and at the same time true art (xix 146-7, 254, 565, 572).

Besides poetry and the novel, history is mentioned above as one of the forms of literature discussed specifically by Brownson. History does not mean here a mere chronicle of facts. Of course it must limit itself to actual happenings and in that sense cannot be anything but a record of events. However, the events recorded succeeded each other, they are not purely isolated facts, and the historian who desires to 'rise above the dry annalist or bald chronicler,' must give them in their interrelation and their totality (xix 383). There is then in history in a sense a theory above facts, which lifts it from the region of the purely scientific record to that of literature. The presence of a tendency gives history its position as a literary power, which, as in the other forms of literature, exerts its influence on society and must be considered by the literary critic. 'Facts are never to be feared' in themselves, and the theory of the historian should always remain 'within the order of facts,' should be merely a theory according to which the facts are explained and arranged (xix 383, 386). But there are writers who think that history as such is a speculative science. They record facts in accordance with a theory that is not merely historical, that transcends the order of facts and searches into the higher origin, into the metaphysical relation and meaning, of events. They write for the purpose of propagating 'metaphysical, ethical, political, and socialistic theories' under the guise of history. Of course all facts of the life of man and of society have a meaning and relation that transcends the world of fact, that can be the object of speculation; but the result of such speculation is no longer the work of the historian—rather of the philosopher and the theologian (xix 383-4, 387). History must remain free of such metaphysical theories, must restrict itself to facts and to the natural order, and guide itself by the demands of literature. If authors wish to propagate theological or metaphysical theories, they should do so in works avowedly of that purpose. They have no right to use history as the means of insinuating their pet speculations into unsuspicious minds that are reading for the events recorded

and are unconscious of the harm and danger possibly lurking there (xix 386).

5.—Criticism

All that has been said so far about the essence and the purpose of true literature finds its application in practical criticism. If the essence of literature is not its literary form but its content, then surely no critic satisfies his obligation by reverting only to the former and ignoring the latter. Brownson himself 'cannot understand literature for its own sake, or say much of the form of a literary work without reference to its contents' (xix 363). Nor is he satisfied with those who make the appearance of any book the occasion merely for searching into the psychological states of a writer, and who value that book only in so far as it reveals this interior condition of his mind. An author, of course, is liable to criticism in so far as he expresses himself in his work, but no farther; as man he is subject to no 'literary tribunal' (xix 330-1). Again Brownson cannot reconcile himself to the practice of those who criticize a book merely by describing the personal emotions which they felt while reading it; he is unable to present his own emotions to the public as the object criticized (xix 364). For him proper criticism commences with ascertaining the end of a literary production as proposed by the author to himself. When this is found to be in accordance with the object of literature in general, the critic proceeds to examine the success with which the writer accomplished his purpose, and the beauty and literary taste by means of which he tried to gain his end (xix 366). Considered in connection with this end, every feature of the work becomes a matter of importance. Separately, indeed, the form has little value; but in its proper relation it can no longer be a matter of indifference and should receive its due consideration (xix 364).

If we examine the fidelity with which Brownson himself follows out his principles, we shall find that his first step is indeed generally to ascertain the aim and the spirit of the author. After that he discusses the success with which the author's purpose was attained and the general effect of the work on the people. Very often the criticism of the content so absorbs

his attention that he loses himself entirely in suggestions of what the content should have been, forgetting all other matters. In such moments of enthusiasm, remarks about the writers often lack the mildness that he himself counsels. On the few occasions when Brownson does remark on the style itself of the productions criticized, we find him berating especially 'efforts at fine writing,' diffuseness, 'lack of dignity and strength,' stiff and awkward dialogues (xix 137, 157, 338, 367), while he singles out for special commendation 'originality, depth and vigor of expression,' a 'natural, simple, easy, graceful' flow, 'clear, strong, terse, energetic' language, 'freedom and conversational directness' (xix 46, 56, 339, 367); but even these are unable to save a situation when 'the decorations strike us more than the temple itself, and the shrine evidently surpasses the god' (xix 3).

If the principles so far mentioned are all that we have entered under the heading of "Literary Principles," we do not mean to give the impression that a complete synthesis has been produced of the views on which Brownson based his criticisms. So far it is especially the sociological aspect of these principles that has been developed, and a further task, equally important if not more so, remains—that of unfolding the principles of aesthetics which guided Brownson in his judgment on the various works considered specifically from the side of art. Not that the sociological principles are something entirely independent of those of aesthetics in Brownson's mind. By no means. All that has been said of literature is also true in a modified way of art in general. But the sociological principles have been emphasized here because they were thus implicitly emphasized by Brownson himself and because they receive a more extensive and more direct application in the field of literature than in that of the other forms of art. In most of his literary criticisms Brownson views the works in question also more directly under the relation of art; and a sufficient number of statements can be gathered to obtain from them an estimate of his theory of aesthetics. Indeed, without these aesthetic principles and without a close connection between them and the sociological conception, literature would for Brownson come to mean writing formally didactic in nature, despite his protestations to the contrary.

CHAPTER II

AESTHETIC PRINCIPLES

1.—Idea of Art and Aesthetics

A work of art contains in itself the beautiful; to embody and reveal this, says Brownson, is the province of art (xix 126). Around the meaning of the term beautiful, then, will center every discussion or philosophy of art according to Brownson. Genius, talent, and learning, he says, do not suffice in themselves; if they are applied to a false theory of art, the result will be disastrous to human nature or at least repulsive to the very idea of true art (xix 48-9). Even the ancients were aware that art gives expression to the beautiful by imitating nature. This, indeed, is correct if a proper understanding prevails as to the extent of the imitation (xix 420). The problem thus again resolves itself into a question of how far the beautiful is expressed in nature, of a proper understanding of the term beautiful. And an elaboration of this conception will also be an exposition of Brownson's system of aesthetic principles.

If we speak of the beauty expressed in a work of art, this does not refer to any beauty of individual details, but applies rather to the work of art considered as a whole, in its totality (xix 3). A work of art is nothing if it is not a compact unity. Art, moreover, has 'higher requisites' than that of a presentation of mere beauty; and if the whole of an artistic production does not tend towards satisfying these higher requisites, it must be said to fail (xix 191). The primary object of art is not merely to present a work of art as such, but to move and to please by means of it (xix 228). Art thus addresses itself to human nature with the view of moving it to higher aspirations. To effect this the simple cognition of beauty is never sufficient (xix 123), and hence arises the mission of art as an impelling power, a mission beyond the mere presentation of beauty. Nor is it correct to say that art should aim merely at developing the natural powers of man, at 'the realization, so to speak, of the potentialities of human nature' (xix 109, 110). The

end of man lies higher than this, and the end of art, as was said above regarding literature, is the furtherance of the end of man. Thus the proper conception of art is inseparably connected with an end beyond that of mere beauty. Looking back at all the old masterpieces of art, we find everywhere that there is an end beyond. 'Always does the artist seek to affect the minds or the hearts of his like, to move, persuade, convince, please, instruct, or enoble. To this end he chants a poem, composes a melody, laughs in a comedy, weeps in a tragedy, gives us an oration, a treatise, a picture, a statue, a temple' (xix 20).

2.—The Beautiful

The influence that a piece of art exerts on men is of highest importance, because through this influence does art attain its end. Generally speaking, art is nothing but the application of the knowledge of truth to life (xix 312-3). From this practical aspect is derived all the good in art, and all the evil consequent upon a false notion of aesthetics. It is not true at all that the general effect of all art is 'to liberate the mind,' that all art as such ennobles (xix 127). Only too many persons are well aware of the effect with which they can appeal to our lower nature through it. The art that tends to gratify perverse tendencies instead of tranquillizing passions is only too frequent. Beauty as such appeals directly not to our intellect or our will but to the sensibility alone; and it is only through the sensibility that it reaches will and intellect. Art either directs this sensibility towards what is good and true and thus promotes the moral and intellectual culture of men; or it directs the sensibility away from what is good and true, and in this way it tends to corrupt human nature. Although in the one case it is art as well as in the other, nevertheless only the former art can be recommended as healthy and useful to man (xix 126).

In order to obtain this first kind of art, it is of the greatest importance to realize that 'the beautiful is the form of the true,' than it cannot exist where the true is absent (xix 312). There is a kind of ideal truth to which all art must conform (xix 314). Likewise must a high spiritual or moral culture pervade a work

of art, else it will invariably tend to corrupt. As art must tend to uplift man, to introduce 'a better and nobler social order,' it is indispensable that false doctrines and unsound morals be eliminated; they are as repugnant to real beauty as is physical deformity (xix 53, 191, 318). Art will be genuine and true, a real embodiment of the beautiful, only when it elevates us above the region of mere sense into the realm of the intelligible world 'by exciting in us noble thoughts, lofty aspirations, and so charming the rational soul, the intellect and will, with spiritual truth and goodness, that the sensitive soul, so to speak, is for the time being overpowered and rendered unable to disturb us' (xix 321). To attain the truly beautiful, therefore, it is necessary that our aesthetics be firmly grounded in ethics and determined by the latter (xix 318).

Aesthetics needs ethics as a support. It will topple to the ground and grovel in the dirt without ethics. The claim of some persons, therefore, that aesthetics is a substitute for ethics, cannot be held. In art the beautiful, 'which affects the sensibility,' is apprehended by the intellect, and thus begets the sentiment of love. But further it cannot go; 'here begins and ends the whole influence of art' (xix 126). Hence follows the error in Schiller's contention, which claims for aesthetic culture alone the duty of lifting mankind to a higher order (xix 106, 109). Schiller recognizes well enough that exclusive development of the outer life leads to barbarism, and that exclusive confinement to the inner life can have no practical results in the outward condition of life; and he concludes rightly that the two must be combined. The third term that is to unite the inner life and the outward condition he finds to be the ideal of beauty, which thus has the office of saving mankind from barbarism on the one hand and from an unpractical intellectualism on the other, and of carrying him forward to his destiny (xix 106). But an ideal beauty of this nature Brownson cannot understand. As ideal, this beauty is unreal and cannot operate; it is therefore not capable of setting in motion the 'play-impulse' (xix 113). Nor is it able to realize itself, for it must be in a state of reality before it is capable of acting. (*Ibid.*) 'The soul must have been liberated, the will elevated, its affections purified, by other than aesthetic influences, before aesthetic culture can aid moral progress' (xix 127); and aesthetics, far

from being a substitute for ethics, needs the latter as a guide.

As all things were created by God and must tend towards Him as their end, He is both first cause and final cause (xix 422). Hence there are as it were 'two cosmic cycles, the procession of existences by the creative act of being—not by emanation—from God, and their return, without being absorbed, to Him as their final cause or end.' (*Ibid.*) The precise position of art is that it copies 'at an infinite distance, of course,' this first cycle, the creative activity of God. (*Ibid.*) Art, to be true, must bear the stamp of that which it imitates; it must aim to give exterior form to the ideal beauty that is present to the intuitive apprehension of all men. (*Ibid.*) Now human nature considered physically is indeed good, but considered morally is corrupt (xix 322); and art must rise above nature, triumph over it, and reach a higher beauty. In so far as art appeals then to mere nature, it is actually irreligious (xix 232); it addresses only fallen human nature. Whatever truth it does attain, under those circumstances, is truth only for man in the fallen, abnormal state; and this after all is false, far from being either good or beautiful (xix 326). We have said before that no cultivation of natural powers brings us nearer to God; we must aim higher; 'all that is not for this supernatural life is against it' (xix 233, 234). Our aim must therefore go beyond the profane, or merely natural. Of course the artist cannot help embodying also sensible beauty. But he may not present it in the form that carries it merely in a natural direction; 'he must clothe it with a higher beauty, a beauty not sensible, but ideal, spiritual, moral, celestial' (xix 328). Such beauty is truly an image of God, and in it rests the truth, beauty, and goodness of all things. Anything that leads away from this image or obscures it also obscures the beautiful (xix 321). Thus all beauty has its origin in God. Even when presented as created beauty, it must be indeed 'distinguishable' from God, but still 'inseparable' from Him, like all reality (xix 320). Art therefore imitates nature 'in her creative energy,' and tries to realize 'with its own forms, the beautiful, which the soul of the artist beholds' (xix 420).

No genuine art is possible as long as the mind and the heart turn merely to outward nature and regard only sensible and material objects (xix 313). But is not this demanding that all

art be religious art? In the sense of what was said above, Yes. Religious art and secular art, both being forms of one genus, must have much in common. Both portray the beautiful, aim to move and please, and address the same elements of human nature (xix 228). They differ, however, in this that religious art expresses directly the religious life, supernatural beauty; while secular art presents natural beauty in its higher form (xix 228, 230). While religious art represents therefore a beauty that is superhuman, above nature, and tends to lift man entirely out of the natural order, secular art takes beauty in the natural order and tends to direct it towards the supernatural, 'to exalt and endear' it (xix 228). Religious art, then, while not excluding the senses and imagination, abstracts from sensible pleasure (xix 228, 229) ; whereas secular art addresses the sensible faculties of man with a higher motive.

Just herein, however, lies the great danger of secular art, the pitfall of many an artist. There are those who try to steer a middle course. They condemn all art that is purely sensuous as being contrary to true beauty. At the same time they proclaim that the artist can up to a certain point directly employ the 'sensitive emotions, passions, affections, tendencies' as long as he guards against excess (xix 321). Such persons proceed on the assumption that nature is essentially good, and that they can properly use all its tendencies provided they do not exceed a set limit. But such theorists are the most dangerous of all, as they 'soothe and lull the conscience while they delight the flesh' (xix 321, 322). It matters not, therefore, in what degree sensuous delight is appealed to; a compromise is impossible, and the attempt to employ the natural affections or passions in their natural order is always immoral and consequently inartistic (xix 323).

3.—The Artist

In order to produce a work of art, to express the true and the good under the form of the beautiful, the artist must be able to distinguish true from false beauty. He must therefore be imbued with firm principles that will guide him aright in all conditions. He must have a sound knowledge and ever be able to discern well what is true from what is false (xix 312), to detect

that which is true of human nature in a broader sense from a whim of his own (xix 429). He must be not only an artist, but a great theologian, philosopher, and moralist at the same time, and never lose sight of the great religious truths that underlie the mystery of the universe (xix 230, 303-4). Not that he sould dogmatize, 'or indulge in didactic teaching;' his proper sphere must always be before his mind, and he must recognize simply that a false philosophy and false morality are insurmountable obstacles to the attainment of the ideal beauty which it is his sphere to portray (xix 109, 304, 313).

The ideal which the artist is to seek must be apprehended by him in such a way that he speaks from his inner self. He must assimilate his ideals to such an extent that it becomes a part of his inward experience (xix 429, 494). He who merely imitates the ideals and sentiments of others is simply a copyist. The 'common and universal nature,' which is the source of art, exists in every fully developed man; and the more truly anyone 'expresses what is truest, richest and broadest in human nature' the more truly is that person an artist (xix 494). No man can express what he has not within himself. Every artist paints first of all himself; he projects himself into his work, and his work is the expression of his interior life (xix 229).

It thus becomes evident how well the artist must make the beauty he sees a part of his life; and how the assimilation of the highest form of beauty will result in the highest form of art (xix 312, 429). Only when his ideal becomes one with him, will his work have the fresh and living spontaneity of true art; only thus will he be capable of a 'spontaneous and free expression of the inward spirit' (xix 589). The clothing of his ideal with an adequate form, the outward realization of what has already been realized within (xix 229), gives to artistic genius its high rank. Art thus becomes, faintly of course, an imitation of the creative act of God—an imitation of the first cycle mentioned above, of the productive activity of the Creator (xix 422). No wonder then that the artistic genius is considered by all to be 'the sublimest, the most beautiful, and the most godlike' (xix 423). No wonder then that this genius is so rare. It is not given to everyone to behold 'the ideal present to his intuitive apprehension' far more clearly than other men, and to embody it under the form of the beautiful. It is a gift that must be

given by nature and is present only in the greatest masters (xix 313, 332, 328).

4.—Philosophy of the Beautiful

It has been mentioned several times that the artist, to be truly successful, must be a man of sound philosophical principles. The artist really obtains his materials from science and philosophy (xix 313). It has likewise been stated that the artist practices art without philosophizing about it. This implies naturally that there is a philosophy of the beautiful, a firmly grounded system of aesthetic principles. It is from this philosophy of art that the critic or the teacher of aesthetics draws his inspiration. There can be no good literary or artistic criticism without a definite philosophy of art (xix 419). The intimate relation between beauty and goodness and truth has often been mentioned. Just what this relation is it should be the province of a philosophy of aesthetics to search into and explain.

The beautiful as such, says Brownson, does not appeal to the intellect, but to the sensibility (xix 126), and by the latter term he means the emotional element in man. Such is the peculiar nature of man that the emotions are moved immediately upon the intuition or apprehension of the beautiful. But the apprehension must exist before the attraction or delight takes place. (*Ibid.*) It is therefore through the intellect, or rather the imagination, that beauty pleases and moves the will. The imagination is generally considered a mixed faculty; it belongs to the whole man, rational and animal. But the rational must of course always predominate; and beauty, to be true, will address the instinctive nature of man, the passions and emotions, only from the higher, the rational side (xix 319, 328). Beauty, then, although its appeal is to the emotional element, addresses no special faculty of aesethetic perception, though some claim it does, but rather the combined faculties of the rational soul. The emotional element is integral in man as well as the rational; but they are not separated. Man 'never acts as intellect and will without sensibility, or as sensibility without some affectation of reason' (xix 327); for man's soul is essentially one and rational. For this reason the man that beholds a work of art views it not only as an imaginative, but also as a reason-

able and moral agent; and it cannot satisfy the demands of his soul, if it fails under the aspect of reason or will any more than if it fails under that of the imagination (xix 190).[1]

Thus we can understand how that beauty which charms only the irrational side of man's nature and leaves the faculty of reason unsatisfied degrades man and is not beauty in the strict sense (xix 190, 319). Since art must address all three relations of man's soul, understanding, will, and imagination, the object it presents must appeal to the reason as true, to the will as good, and to the imagination as beauty (xix 318-9). Beauty can therefore be conceded to be distinguishable from the true and the good, but in reality it is inseparable from them; and only that is properly the object of the imagination which is also rational and intelligible and belongs also to the order of the true and the good, is in fact identical with these. (*Ibid.*) Since beauty thus depends on truth, the error of those persons is obvious who claim that it depends solely on an internal state of the soul, that it is merely psychological and not ontological (xix 190, 419). Beauty is not self-sufficient, it needs a further prop. Only 'truth has a bottom of its own, and can stand by itself; but beauty cannot, for it exists only in the relation of the true to our sensibility or imagination, as a combination of intellect and sense' (xix 502). True beauty in this sense is therefore not merely a creation of the human soul; it is not merely subjective but objective. Although it appeals to what is 'common to all men, and inseparable and indistinguishable from the essential nature of man,' its true source is higher—the universal and the permanent, in other words, God (xix 190-1). Thus all beauty rests ultimately in the Supreme Being—who is at the same time the Supreme Good, the Supreme Truth, and the Supreme Beautiful—and is distinguishable from Him only as the splendor is from the resplendent (xix 420). The science of aesthetics itself cannot give an analysis that is final, but in turn rests on the science of being, ontology. 'A true science of art must have an ontological basis, and is not possible without a true and adequate ontology.' (*Ibid.*) If the latter is false, naturally the principles of art deduced from it will

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1 By imagination Brownson sometimes seems to mean the emotional faculty in man, at times rightly called sensibility by him.

also be vitiated.

In order to obtain a proper understanding of the aesthetic principles so far unfolded, of the idea of beauty as it existed in Brownson, it will be necessary for us to examine the ontological principles held by him. Brownson's claim that the principles of aesthetics ought to be grounded on ontological principles, finds a full realization in his own thought. And we shall see on examining his ontology—chiefly as it is expressed in the essays under consideration—that it contains, if not a vindication, then at least an explanation of his theory of aesthetics.

CHAPTER III

ONTOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES

Brownson's ontology centers around the problem of the ideal, i.e., of that notion of the universal and necessary being which is found in the minds of all men. He seeks to learn how man acquired the general notion of necessary being, what this ideal notion is, and how it is possible for thought to originate. In the first place he thinks it evident that this idea cannot arise from sense-perception. The mind, when it operates upon the senses by the method of abstraction, can never arrive at the knowledge of a real and necessary being, an *'ens necessarium et reale,'* for the simple and logical reason that such a conclusion would be greater than the premises warrant (xix 489). The less cannot contain the greater; sound logic forbids that a conclusion contain what is not contained in the premises. Hence those who assert that they obtain the notion of a necessary being from sense-perception, which presents only contingent things, err, not in the fact that they have the notion, but in the method in which they claim to get it. Without knowing it they really obtain the notion of necessary being by intuition, which offers the only logical solution of the problem (xix 489).

But another question immediately arises: By the intuition of what is man enabled to arrive at the notions that he possesses? Here opinions differ, though the solution again is only one. The exclusive ontologist says we obtain all knowledge through the intuition of simple being. He is right in saying that we have this intuition, but wrong in inferring that from the intuition of simple being we can deduce the idea of existences or creatures, for from it nothing can be derived but mere being (xix 489). In the same way the intuition of existences, or created beings, cannot lead us to the intuition of necessary being; 'it is strange that this should be disputed' (xix 488). Some try to avoid all difficulties by claiming for man the intuition simply of being as *ens necessarium et reale,* of an all-perfect being—of God, if you like (xix 487-8). Again we must point out the insufficiency of the supposition. This no-

tion gives us only the assurance of a possible creator, one who can create; but it teaches us nothing as to the actual fact of a creation. An argument that proceeds from the possibility to the actuality of anything is invalid and cannot stand. (*Ibid.*) What then is the solution?

The opinions so far advanced contain only a part of the truth, one of the elements of knowledge. They err in claiming that from this one element the others can be deduced, whereas all the elements of knowledge must be present in the mind before any deduction or thinking can take place (xix 489). The fact simply is that we have in us the notion of contingent beings, and especially that we have the notion of absolute being; that the intuition of one of these does not lead to the other, and that the intuition of the two still merely gives two entities separated by a bottomless chasm. Before any process of thought can occur, before we can go from one of these notions to the other, before we can classify our sense-perceptions under general notions and thus acquire knowledge, our mind must possess the connecting link between the notion of the contingent and the universal ideal. Hence our intuition must contain also this third element of thought. Now that which connects the necessary and the contingent is the creative act, and our intuition must therefore contain the notion of creation. This condition is fulfilled admirably if we postulate the intuition of the absolute being as creator of the contingent beings, the intuition of an ontological formula that includes 'the intuition of being, existence, and the creative act, which unites them' (xix 488). Here then is the only possible solution of the difficulty; it alone accounts for the various ideas that we find actually in our minds and gives us the proper relation of these notions in the world of thought and of reality (xix 144).

This expression of Brownson's ontological views, written in 1860, about sixteen years before his death, gives correctly the final form that his speculation on this matter assumed, and is therefore the correct basis for a critical survey of his aesthetic principles. However, a clearer understanding will be obtained of them if we revert to a few statements made elsewhere. "The empirical presents particulars, singulars only," he writes, "but these cannot be thought without the ideal;" and though we may not at first "note or advert to the ideal," the latter must

nevertheless exists in the mind before the former.[2] Again we are told that the intuition, since it is "prior to all experience," can be given "only by the Creator" Himself.[3] This intuition is presented to us

.....simply as the ideal, or as universal, necessary, immutable and eternal ideas, or, as some say, universal, necessary, immutable and eternal truths. These ideas or truths, which are the a priori condition of every thought, of every empirical perception or cognition, and which enter into every cognition or mental operation as an essential element and as an undistinguished part of the complex fact, are, in the last analysis, identically being, though it is only by reflection or reasoning that we know and verify the identity of the ideal and of being, as it is only by reflection or reasoning that we discover and verify the identity of being—real and necessary being we mean—with God.[4]

The process of intuition therefore ultimately gives us the idea of God, although we must not understand this "in any other sense than that we have intuition of that which can be demonstrated to be God. We know by intuition that which is God, but not that it is God."[5] A final quotation, taken from the last article that Brownson wrote, again emphasizes the full significance of the intuitional formula, *Ens creat existentias*:

We say nothing here as to the way in which the mind comes into possession of this formula, but this much we hold is certain, that there is no mental operation and no mind possible, without the principle summarized or expressed by it. These principles connect all existences with God by His creative act, and consequently show that the natural is really related to the supernatural, for the Creator of nature is necessarily above nature, that is, supernatural.[6]

These words express clearly the full importance of the intuitional theory to Brownson as far as mental activity is concerned. He himself did not fail in his *Literary Essays* to show its direct

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2 Letter to Father Hewit (year 1872). *Brownson's Latter Life*, p. 571-2. Detroit 1900.
3 Letter to "a priest at the seminary near Milwaukee" (year 1870). *Op. cit.*, p. 556.
4 *Works*, ii, 476-7 (year 1874). Detroit 1882-7.
5 *Op. cit.*, ii, 304 (year 1867).
6 *Op. cit.*, ii, 277.

bearing on his view of aesthetics. In a general way we hinted at this when we gave Brownson's opinion of the connection between aesthetics and ontology, and it remains only to show the particular application as found in the writings under our consideration.

Whenever Brownson mentions true beauty, he refers not to what pleases the ordinary nature of man, but to that higher ideal which is found in 'the common and universal human nature.' This higher ideal, which is given to man by intuition of the formula *Ens creat existentias,* is identical with God and has all the qualities of the all-perfect, supreme Being. It is all-true, all-beautiful, all-good (xix 190, 420, 494). Since the expression of the beautiful as given in this ideal alone constitutes true art, all that was said above about the necessary identity of the beautiful with the true and the good becomes self-evident. Again art imitates the creative act that is expressed in the formula 'Being-God-creates existences,' and 'will be higher or lower as it takes this act, so to speak, on the side of being or on that of existences, and imitates the divine act in its primary revelation, or only as it is copied by existences in the order of second causes' (xix 423). Much of the modern art fails just here. It copies the creative act 'only at second hand, in its pale reflex in the order of second causes,' in the order of nature. For that reason it is feeble, lacks 'grandeur of conception, freedom and boldness in execution, and is admirable only in the petty details' (xix 423). Thus, according to Brownson, the ideal of beauty is given to man in the intuitive apprehension, the ideal of the sublime comes from the contemplation of the creative act, and art must be judged by its relation to the ontological formula, *Ens creat existentias.* Without this formula, on which he bases his ontology, his theory of art has no value. Hence the first step in examining the various views so far expressed will be to test the validity of Brownson's ontological principles.

PART II

CRITICAL

CHAPTER IV

CRITIQUE OF THE ONTOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES

For our purpose the importance of Brownson's ontological theory lies in the fact that it tries to explain how ideas originated, and therefore how man arrived at the idea of the beautiful. It not only does this but goes farther. In accounting for the origin of our idea of the beautiful, or of any other idea, it would give us also some intimation of the content of that idea. Thus he who holds that our idea of the beautiful is derived from, or ultimately equal to, the idea of the All-Perfect will have a view of art and aesthetics widely different from that of the man who believes that his idea of the beautiful arose, say, from the contemplation of nature. Considered in this light the examination of Brownson's ontology, which is really ontologism, should give us some indication of the value of what he says about art; surely some comprehension of his reason for saying that which he does say.

Stoeckl remarks that for idealistic minds ontologism with its immediate knowledge of God has something attractive.[7] Throughout the history of thought we find great names connected with the theory of the intuition either of ideas that are innate or of the idea of God. Is it that such minds have a more penetrating perception than those of ordinary men? Surely, a refutation of their contention is often made by the statement that men in general are not aware of any such intuition. It should be an easy matter for all men to entertain a distinct notion of God and a conviction of His presence through mere reflection, Father Boedder says, if it were a natural endowment of the human soul to have a direct intuition of God and of His relation to creatures.[8] But the consciousness of men in general opposes such a supposition. They are not aware of comparing the finite with the infinite, the relative with the absolute, in order to recognize the finite and the

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7 *Geschichte der neueren Philosophie*, ii, 583. Mainz 1883.
8 *Natural Theology*, p. 15. New York 1910.

relative. The claim cannot be established psychologically, and therefore it rests on a weak footing and is scientifically unjustifiable.[9] However, the dictum that their theories are based on a mere assumption will hardly convince ontologists, and certainly does not meet them directly, since they do not refer to inner consciousness as a proof of their doctrine.

This is the position of Brownson. He does not fall back on psychological evidence for his ontologism, but rather on a priori principles. He rests his theory on the fact that no other explanation of the origin of ideas is adequate, or logically sound; and he might have answered the objectors that appealed to experience, by asking what actual consciousness they did possess with regard to their first ideas. If his ontologism is false, the error in it should also be recognizable in the principles on which it rests, or in the process of deduction from these principles. A more positive way of meeting Brownson will be an attempt to disqualify his contention that any other method than his for explaining the origin of ideas is inadequate. A mere demonstration of the possibility or logicalness of some other method will show his a priori deductions to be false.

It will not be sufficient to apply another general refutation, opposed as a rule to the so-called ontological proof for the existence of God, to Brownson's theory, namely, that it jumps the chasm between the ideal and the real—in other words, that the formula, Being creates existences, is after all only in our mind, and that from it alone as something ideal we can never proceed to the actually existing. This Brownson does not hold. He admits that our knowledge arises through or with sense-perception, and he does not deny that in each object perceived by the senses there is that which gives us the right to classify it as a thing and predicate being of it.[10] But he does assert that man would not be able to recognize this fact unless he previously had in his mind the idea of being, without which idea no number of sense-perceptions could result in knowledge. Moreover, even if sense-perception could do so, he claims, there would still be the impossible step of arriving at the idea of God, the idea of the infinite, possessed by men. The assertions

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9 Stoeckl, *Op. cit.*, p. 584.
10 *Works*, i and ii, *passim.* Detroit, 1882-7.

in the last two sentences it is that we wish to examine more closely.

In order to arrive at intellectual knowledge through sense-perception, nothing more seems necessary than the recognition of similarity and of difference between several objects that present themselves through the senses. The growing consciousness in a child's mind of a similarity between several objects despite some differences, in other words, the consciousness of a common note in all of them, is in reality the acquisition of the idea of being in its vaguest form. If, as Brownson says, we have the idea of being previous to any sense-perception, then it would still be necessary to recognize the identity or similarity between this idea and a something in the object perceived; and it is hard to see why this step is less difficult and less improbable than the simple recognition of a common note in several objects in themselves. But Brownson might have conceded, for the sake of argument merely, that the idea of being may be thus attained. For the important point was that such an explanation cannot account for the idea in us of the necessary, universal being—from which the notion of beauty is acquired—as that would be deriving an effect from a smaller, an inadequate cause. Here Brownson confuses the ontological order with the logical, the realm of ideas with the realm of fact. In the world of the actual a universal, necessary, unlimited being is incomparably greater than a limited, contingent being; but not so in the realm of the idea. Our notion of a contingent being consists of two things at least, being plus limitation; while the notion of infinite being consists simply of essential being, without the addition of limitaton. Thus the latter notion is simpler that the former, it has fewer qualifications of content, and can be derived from the former by taking away the attribute of limitation. In this way the origin of the idea of the infinite from that of the finite was already explained by the Schoolmen, with whom Brownson is here crossing swords. The idea thus obtained is therefore rather negative than positive and is identical with the ideal that Brownson claimed to find in the minds of all men according to his own description of it.

The above discussion may seem superfluous to some and would indeed be so if our purpose were not to examine the

theories of Brownson to their foundation. The nature of our task demands first of all logical completeness, and this necessitated the preceding paragraphs, which have a vital bearing on our matter. If man has an intuition of what is identical with the all-perfect Creator, then surely there is no excuse for not knowing and pursuing the highest form of beauty, there is in fact no excuse for striving after any form of beauty but this ideal. Especially would this ideal beauty be the standard according to which the critic should have to form his judgment. It was from this standpoint of the critic that Brownson made all his statements, and tried to apply his standard. His initial error was that he did not recognize the negative nature of the ideal which forms the core of his art theories. The idea of the infinite, since it has no positive content, can tell us nothing positive. Even if we call God the all-beautiful, it means in content rather the absence of all imperfections, and at most teaches us that the concretely beautiful must conform negatively with the idea of God—thus indicating no more than the general tendency that all activities must pursue. The same holds with regard to the good and the true. In ultimate ontological analysis the true and the good and the beautiful are the same, and identical with God. But further this analysis cannot take us. It tells us that goodness and truth in God mean conformity with Himself; but we learn nothing from this with regard to the world of the concrete; and for a positive morality and truth we must examine nature—especially that of rational man—which as creature bears the impress of its Creator.

This is just where Brownson stopped short. It may have been as a recoil from Transcendentalism that he seemed to recognize nothing good or beautiful in pure nature, and thought that nature in any aspect could be countenanced only in as far as it was brought directly into relation with the supernatural. He depreciated nature—the statements that seem to indicate the contrary are negligible over against a host of others—and he depreciated natural reason. He could not see that nature produced the ideal that he found in mankind; and he forgot that, outside of revelation, nature alone tells us whatever we know positively of truth, morality, and beauty. In the last article of his life he tells us:

The whole principle and scope of the teleological order, or

what Gioberti calls the second cycle or the return of existences to God without absorption in him as their final cause or last end [and this second cycle Brownson elsewhere explains as the aim of ethics or morality],[11] transcends the reach of our natural faculties, or the light of nature, and is known only by supernatural revelation.[12]

11 *Works*, xix, 422.
12 *Op. cit.*, ii, 280-1.

CHAPTER V

CRITIQUE OF THE AESTHETIC PRINCIPLES

1.—Viewpoints in Art

We have seen that Brownson's definition of art centers about the beautiful and that his views on art are consequently determined by his idea of the beautiful. Just as the problem of the beautiful may be approached from different viewpoints, so too that of art. Thus art or the beautiful may be viewed in its effect, in as far as it is something that affects the minds of the perceivers regardless of the artist's intentions; or it may be regarded in its origin, as existing in the mind of the artist regardless of its effect on others. Innumerable opinions on the essence of art have been given, generally along one or the other of the above tendencies. As a rule each of these classes of opinions tries to exclude the other; the one claiming that art is independent of the beholder's mind, the other claiming that it is only what the beholder sees it to be.

It would be impossible here to mention even a small portion of the theories of art advanced at different times, and it would be out of place, since our intention is far from writing a historical sketch. Opinions on the one side stress the fact that any work of art should convey some idea that exists in the artist's mind. "There is no other fine art than this—the passing of a man's soul into the work of his hands."[13] Opinions on the other side emphasize the charm or pleasure as their criterion of art. Marshall says: "Any device of man which serves to produce in any one an aesthetic thrill I shall not hesitate to call a work of art."[14] This second class sometimes turns not so much upon the amount of aesthetic pleasure derived, as of the life-experience—"Art for life's sake," Thus Guyau writes: "L'art véritable est, selon nous, celui qui nous donne le sentiment immédiat de la vie la plus intense et la plus expansive

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13 *English Illustrated Magazine*, 10: 697.
14 *Pain, Pleasure and Aesthetics*, p. 112. London 1894.

tout ensemble, la plus individuelle et la plus sociale."[15] Guyau also stresses the suggestive force that art exerts, though he does not go to the extreme of the writer who said categorically: "Art, when all is said, is a suggestion, and it refuses to be explained."[16] A more correct view of art is probably obtained in stressing neither of the viewpoints too much, but rather combining them in equal porportions. Reynolds speaks of art as having beauty for its object. This beauty "is an idea residing in the breast of the artist, which he is always labouring to impart, which he is yet so far able to communicate, as to raise the thoughts, and extend the views of the spectator."[17]

We shall consider art first of all as an activity on the part of the artist, then in its effects on men. As our criticism of Brownson's views is to be not only destructive, but also constructive, in fact mainly the latter, we shall not only mention points in which we take issue with him, but also others which he probably omitted to treat because he did not write a synthesis of aesthetic principles and because he made his statements only from the standpoint of the critic as prompted by the various works that were before him at different times.

2.—The Artistic Activity

Brownson speaks of the activity on the part of the artist as consisting mainly in the mental apprehension of an ideal which the artist strives to clothe in exterior form for the benefit and higher enjoyment of his fellowmen. The form of an artistic production he considers of no importance compared to the ideal to be expressed. An opposite view is held by those who claim that the form as such is the essence of art and that the content matters little. A possible third position combines the two and insists on the importance of form because of its intimate relation to the content, its inseparableness from the latter. This view is clearly expounded by Benedetto Croce.[18]

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15 *L'art au point de vue sociologique*, p. 75. Paris, 1889.
16 *Academy*, 53: 545.
17 *Discourses on Art*, p. 155. Everyman's Library.
18 *Aesthetic as Science of Expression and General Linguistic.* (Tr. by Douglas Ainslie.) New York 1908.

Because Croce's views in some respects attract us very much and will be referred to hereafter, we shall give a short exposition of them.

According to Croce the essence of the artistic activity consists in intuition. By this term he means the immediate apprehension by the mind of some image or picture without the aid of logic or reflection (therefore not to be confounded with with the same word as used in the above chapters on ontology). This intuition it is that distinguishes art from the sciences, whose essence is the concept, the result of logic or reflection. The concept cannot stand alone, says Croce; it needs also intuitions: but the latter can stand alone and are simple. That is, the mind can apprehend immediately without the aid of reflection; but it cannot reflect without intuitions. The intuitions deal with particulars, while the concept, the result of reflection, deals with universals. Intuition, or immediate apprehension, is very prevalent in ordinary life. But only when it exists in larger quantity than ordinarily, does it rise to the artistic level. Then it not merely forms the basis of art, but is art, for there is no intuition without form. There can be no intuition that is vague or obscure; as soon as it exists in the mind, it is clear, and expressed in some form, be it of sound or color, or be it verbal. In other words, intuition and expression in form are inseparable, the terms are convertible. It follows then that as soon as an intuition of more than the ordinary extent is given, we have a work of art. The latter is therefore essentially something internal. However, it is nothing incommunicable and can be transmitted to others by externalizing the internal expression. The artist has no choice as to the intuitions that present themselves to him, but he can choose to which of the intuitions present he is to give external form. He can be called to account for what he has chosen to externalize, though not from the standpoint of pure art. The latter concerns itself only with the intuition as such, and for that, as was said above, the artist is not responsible. To avoid misconception it is necessary to add that intuition and concept may be found in combination, but that the former must predominate in art and the latter in a philosophical treatise, judgment in regard to this being made in accordance with the result intended by the artist.

Not without his good reason does Croce stress the inwardness, so to say, of art, its purely spiritual nature. Aesthetic for him is the basis of his "Philosophy of the Spirit." This Spirit is reality, "the whole of Reality;"[19] and that which is outside the spirit, nature for instance, is "the non-being which aspires to being."[20] Consequently the external form of art is underrated. For it is after all the external form alone through which the artist expresses the content of his intuition to others, which reveals to others all they can know of the artistic production. However, the intimate connection between content and form, even if the latter is designated as internal, seems to us a point well made, one that Brownson failed to emphasize sufficiently. For him the form was an object of care on the part of the artist merely for the reason that whatever is worth doing at all is worth doing well. It had no intrinsic value beyond this and was insignificant or negligible compared to the ideal which constitutes the essence of art. In our opinion the mistake that Brownson makes, as well as others, rests on the assumption that in a perfect work of art the distinction between form and content is more than mental. Thus, when Schiller says: "In einem wahrhaft schönen Kunstwerk soll der Inhalt nichts, die Form aber alles thun,"[21] he expresses a firm conviction of the actual separability in function of content and form. The whole question, so often discussed, whether it is the idea or the external form that constitutes the essence of art, is based on this assumption.

It is here that we wish to depart from Brownson and hold with Croce the inseparability of form and content in true art, and the consequent erroneousness of contending that either one is unimportant. In all the fine arts the exterior form consists of signs or symbols that are either copied or modified from external nature. These symbols convey images to our minds the moment we behold them, and we cannot behold them as devoid of all content except in mental abstraction. If we view a work of art and conclude that it means nothing to us, this is not because the individual symbols making up the complete form are devoid of content, but because we are not able to unite

19 Douglas Ainslie in *The North American Review*, 198: 483.
20 Ainslie, Introduction to Croce's *Aesthetic*, p. xx.
21 *Werke, xii*, 79. Stuttgart 1862.

the content of these symbols into a congruous whole, into something that is intelligible as a whole. And if we condemn such a work of art, it is not because the form has no content or because the ideas of the artist as such are incongruous (we may not know what those ideas are), but because the form as expressive of a content, or the idea as seen in the form, is unintelligible. "Ja, das Aeussere soll der Künstler darstellen!" exclaims Goethe. "Aber was ist das Aeussere einer organischen Natur anders, als die ewig veränderte Erscheinung der Innern? .....indem beide Bestimmungen, die äussere und die innere, im ruhigsten Daseyn so wie in der stärksten Bewegung, stets im unmittelbarsten Verhältnisse stehen."[22]

Form considered in this light—and we think it cannot be otherwise considered when there is question of a concrete work of art—becomes a matter of great importance, of identical importance with the content. Thus Francis Thompson says well: "This is a concrete example of an abstract principle—the supreme necessity under which truth is bound to give itself a definite shape. Of such immutable importance is form that without this effigy and witness of spirit, spirit walks invisible among men."[23] Some persons might object to the above by referring to different phases of art such as Futurist music, Cubist art, or Imagist poetry, which are frequently condemned for their lack of form, for an utter disregard or contempt of form on the part of the artists. But the latter do not ignore form, they cannot; they can only ignore the conventional rules of artistic form. If their form expresses just what is in their mind, it fulfills its office, and the question turns rather on the content that the form expresses, which may, as we said before, appear incongruous to the general mind, or even incomprehensible. Form is as it were a lens through which the intuition of the artist is visible.

A misconception, however, may easily arise out of what we have said of the inseparability of content and form, unless we explain further. When Croce says that intuition and expression are identical and convertible, he refers to the internal expression in the artist's mind. That there is such an internal

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22 *Sämmtliche Werke*, v, 198. Stuttgart u. Tübingen 1885.
23 *Works*, iii, 71. New York 1913.

expression as soon as we have an intuition seems undoubtable, if we recall that intuition here means an immediate mental apprehension. When we spoke of form above, we meant rather the external expression of this internal expression, and by the inseparability of the form from content we meant, that no given concrete form can be said to be without content, not that a content can be expressed in only one definite external form. There may be, in fact, a great deal of difference between the external form given to the same intuition or internal expression by different persons or at different times, as another factor comes into play here, the technical skill of the artist. Some persons have made the essence of art consist in the technical skill by which an artist can portray symbols in a most perfect manner; and this opinion is the more readily taken up, just because no concrete form is devoid of content. But the accepted meaning of art requires something more than mere imitation on the part of the artist, something more personal, the impress of which is visible in the symbols he chooses, in their arrangement, etc.—in other words, it requires a mental content shining out of the whole. It is the technical skill which enables the artist to externalize his intuition, to reproduce his internal expression. That art would then be the most perfect as art in which the external form exactly reproduces the internal expression of the artist, or of his intuition if these two are really identical as Croce says.[24] Technical skill, then, does not make the artist, and persons spend years in becoming proficient in it without becoming artists. Nevertheless it is indispensable for a perfect externalization of an artistic intuition and is therefore a necessary condition of true art. This fact Brownson apparently neglected, since he emphasized so much the importance of content and the insignificance of the form.

James Sulley in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica,* article "Aesthetics," says that "aesthetic contemplation is marked off from the arduous mental work which enters into the pursuit of knowl-

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24 An opinion not infrequently found is that the external form never equals, but only approaches, the internal expression. Francis Thompson, e. g., writes: "In Painting and Music the same thing holds good. In both there is the conception (a term perhaps less suggesting unreality than the term 'ideal') with its material expression; and between these two stages a mental expression which the material expression cannot realize." *Op. cit.,* iii, 85.

edge;" again, "aesthetic experience is clearly marked off from practical life, with its urgent desires and the rest." He here touches upon a point that is often brought forth with regard to art, that a work of art should be intelligible at first sight under proper conditions. The same is well expressed by Saint Thomas when he calls the beautiful that which pleases when seen (i. e., perceived). This view of art, considered from the side of the artist, is just what Croce refers to when he says that artistic expression is intuition, that it is immediate apprehension. But we think he goes too far when he wishes to exclude reasoning and reflection from pure artistic expression. If the intuition is immediate apprehension of some idea or ideal, it may nevertheless be the result of a process of reasoning; it may happen that only after strenuous reflection does an idea strike us clearly and forcibly. Nevertheless this intuition, no matter how obtained, is commonly believed to be at the basis of all art. For, what is ordinarily meant when we say that an artist has an inspiration, unless that a mental vision has impresed itself forcibly on him? Again, when we speak of the unity in art, does it not mean that art is the expression of a mental vision apprehended as a single moment, and not of a process of reasoning as such, which is the essence of the scientific treatise? We said above that the inspiration or intuition of the artist may have struck him after a process of profound reasoning. It may also have been possible to him only on acount of his deep erudition; and then we may have a work of art that requires a high culture on the part of the beholder for its appreciation, and we have at times works that can never receive general appreciation. Thus arises what Tolstoi deprecates so vigorously—a species of art for the educated classes. We find here, too, an explanation of the fact that works of art range from the very simple to the very profound. In general, art should be intelligible to any person of sufficient culture by an act of immediate apprehension since it is the expresion of a single instant of mental vision. Here we again see the absolute importance of form and of a requisite technical skill, since it is the form alone that conveys this vision immediately to the beholder.

It is this expression of an intuition in art, of a personal mental vision of the artist, that has given to artistic production the term creative. This point is emphasized strongly by

Brownson, who makes it a distinguishing feature of art that it be the expression of a personal idea, and not imitation. That the highest form of art does not consist in mere imitation, "the mere photographic representation of external objects," as Francis Thompson calls it, is hardly a matter of discussion. "Every important piece of literature, as every important work of plastic art," says Mr. Brownell, "is the expression of a personality, and it is not the material of it, but the mind behind it, that invites critical interpretation."[25] Mr. Woodberry voices a common sentiment when he says: "I should be ill-content if works of art, taken individually, yielded to the critic only a momentary experience of the senses and the feelings, as if they who merely disparate objects of nature. I desire to know their meaning to the soul."[26] Even Pater, who is often hailed as a great exponent of art for art's sake, says, after mentioning the "absolute correspondence of term to import," of form to content, as the condition of all good art: "Good art, but not necessarily great art; the distinction between great art and good art depending immediately, as regards literature at all events, not on its form, but on the matter."[27] We have distinguished between art as expressing a personal, spiritual content and art as mere imitation because the advocates of the latter viewpoint as a rule extol fineness of imitation to the extent of making the content a matter to be ignored. Ruskin calls that art greatest "which conveys to the mind of the spectator, by any means whatever, the greatest number of the greatest ideas."[28] The words "by any means whatever" include imitation; and all art does imitate in as far as it copies its symbols from nature. Just to what extent art can be satisfied with imitating nature is a question that leads to the discussion of the relation betwen art and nature.

There is a bond of sympathy, writes Brother Azarias, between man and nature, which is strong and wholesome when properly regulated, but can develop into a kind of reverie in which the soul loses itself as it were in a sentimental abandonment.[29]

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25 *Criticism*, p. 16. New York 1914.
26 *Two Phases of Criticism*, p. 31. Boston 1914.
27 *Appreciations*, pp. 35-6. New York 1897.
28 *Works*, iii, 92. London 1903.
29 *Phases of Thought and Criticism*, p. 37. Boston 1893.

Chateaubriand speaks of "the instinctive melancholy" in a man who communes with nature, "which makes him harmonize with the scenery of nature."[30] But nature also has something that refreshes and inspires. And if the artist seizes upon scenes that thus affect him, and tries to reproduce them with their effect, his work cannot be excluded entirely from art, as Brownson would require. Even if the poet sings:

> But imitative strokes can do no more
> Than please the eye—sweet Nature every sense.
> The air salubrious of her lofty hills,
> The cheering fragrance of her dewy vales,
> And music of her woods—no works of man
> May rival these;[31]

even if the philosopher concludes: "If Art were reduced to the imitation of Nature, to mere copying, Nature would soon supersede it, for the simple reason that the artist would be eliminated from his Art. His humanity and individuality, the interpretative glance that comes from within, the creation of the 'inner eye,' would be lost in the cold reflection or mirroring of external facts;"[32]—the exclusion of such work from art seems an extreme view. We believe that no serious man will select a scene of nature for reproduction unless it means something to him above the ordinary. And in so far as it does mean something above the ordinary to him, his work will come under the title of art, though it cannot rank high as creative art since the scope left to expressing himself is reduced to a minimum. Even in portrait painting, where the artist cannot well select the object to be painted, he is not satisfied with copying mere externals. He fixes in his mind the mental quality, the character trait, that is to shine through the portrait, and this he strives to embody as perfectly as possible.

The relation between nature and art is really very close. The artist not only cannot ignore nature—and here we mean the world with all that is in it—but is unable to get along without nature, for from the latter alone does he draw the material with which he works. Jungmann says well of the artist: "Er studirt diese Gesetze ["des zufälligen Seyns"] und ihren Ausdruck in

30 *Genius of Christianity*, p. 302. Baltimore 1864.
31 Cowper, *The Task*, bk. i, ll. 426-431.
32 Knight, *The Philosophy of the Beautiful*, ii, 24. New York 1898.

der sichtbaren Natur und im Leben der Menschen; diesselben sind die nothwendigen Normen aller seiner Gebilde:.....weil sie [i. e., die Gebilde] aus Erscheinungen bestehen, welche gleichfalls dem Gebiete der Natur und des menschlichen Lebens angehören, und sich darum nicht anders als nach jenen Gesetzen bilden lassen."[33] Thus the artist is limited to nature as he sees it within and without himself for the ways and means of externalizing his intuition. Knight says: "In so far as it deals with the actual world, all Art must spring from existing fact. It must rise from a basis of natural reality, and it must be true to fact even when it transcends it."[34]

This transcending of art above nature raises a question that has met with an immeasurable amount of discussion. Aristotle was probably the first to claim that true art is an improvement upon nature, that nature, especially man in all his activities, must be depicted not merely as he is, but as he ought to be. Brownson espoused this view heart and soul to the extent of denying true beauty—the essence of art for him—to any work that did not portray the natural in its proper relation to the supernatural. Brownson, indeed, claimed at times that art should present real life; but these works had a meaning of their own when he thus used them. Coleridge, in speaking of the Shakespearean drama, said that it "was to present a model by imitation of real life, taking from real life all that in it which it ought to be, and supplying the rest."[35] Only in a similar equivoke did Brownson claim that art should portray real life, or life as it really ought to be. And when he claimed that youth should become acquainted with life as found in the world, he again made the reservation that this should be portrayed from the viewpoint of its eternal value. It seems to us that the question of realism and idealism is not so much one concerning the presence of artistic quality, but rather one concerning the degree in which that quality is present. If an artist intends to portray a phase of life just as he has found it, the reason is because this phase has impressed itself vividly on his mind, and because he wishes to communicate his impression through his art. In that way it may easily happen, as Brown-

33 *Aesthetik*, 2. Bd., s. 133. Freiburg im Breisgan 1886.
34 *Op. cit.*, ii, 56.
35 *Essays and Lectures on Shakespeare*, p. 178. Everyman's Library.

son asserts, that the so-called realists who portray only the coarse side of life may inculcate the doctrine that this is the only aspect of life, that there is nothing higher. But even this does not destroy the presence of artistic quality in their work, in as far as it is the externalization of a mental impression. Realism, then, also has a tinge of the subjective in it, just as idealism cannot wholly abstract from objective nature but is to some extent limited to it. "Pray, sir," we read in Plato's *Republic,* "do not have the strange notion that we ought to beautify the eyes to such a degree that they are no longer eyes."[36]

From all that has been said so far, it is evident that the essence of art in its common acceptation, or rather of artistic activity, lies in the act of embodying in a sensible form some internal vision or intuition of the artist. It is hard, however, to make the whole of art, as Croce does, consist merely in this intuition just because the intuition is identical with internal expression. For that leaves out entirely the question of externalization, of skill in execution, which is after all a *conditio sine qua non* for the production of a work of art. The work of art, then, is the expression by means of sensible signs of some intuition arising or excited in the artist's mind. This definition leaves out of question many things that must still be discussed. It accords with Brownson when he says that art content may be morally good or bad, though not when he immediately turns about in a characteristic way to state that real art is always good and that the bad is not true art. The question of artistic activity leaves out of consideration the ethical quality of the intuition. The artistic activity, the externalization of an intuition or mental vision, is the factor that decides whether a work is art or not. It separates works of art from all other works. Ethics or morality has no word in deciding the presence or artistic activity in a work; and it is the recognition of this that gives rise to phrases like that of "perverted genius" —but genius nevertheless. Even he whose religious delicacy is most shocked by some parts of Byron's *Vision of Judgment* cannot deny the presence of great genius in the work.

The intuitional activity that we claim for art is in some degree present for all men. All men have the faculty of im-

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36 *The Dialogues of Plato,* ii, 244. Boston (191?).

mediate apprehension, though not to the same extent. However, artistic expression refers not to this ordinary intuition, but by common acceptation only to those intuitions that exceed the ability of the ordinary mind. The difference between the two kinds of intuition is not one of intensity, as Croce carefully points out, since every immediate apprehension as such must have clearness; but it is one of quantity or extent. The artistic genius is capable of visions beyond those of the ordinary mind; it reaches a field inaccessible to the latter. In contradistinction to the ordinary intuition, this power of artistic intuition is well termed creative. And that artistic genius is the greatest which possesses this creative power in the greatest degree, which is capable of intuitions that transcend the intuitive ability of the common man to the greatest extent. According to the amount of this intuition portrayed in them, works of art range from those of highest artistic genius to those that take their position just above the border line, that are just beyond the limits of mere "photographic reproduction." If in the definition of the greatest genius as the one who possesses the greatest creative power, we should substitute for 'creative power' the 'power of seeing the highest beauty as identical with truth and goodness,' we should almost be using Brownson's exact words. With his idea of genius we thus agree in as far as the nature of the activity is concerned. But why the same high degree of intuition should not be the mark of genius when the intuition is not that of highest beauty, we cannot understand.

Genius then, the faculty of extraordinary intuitions, is hardly something that can be acquired; and a natural foundation must always be in the mind before a genius can be developed. Development is only a natural result of the proper exercise of any faculty. However, the development of the genius also means the general development of the artist's mind and soul, so that he is better able to act as judge regarding his own intuitions and the advisability and the manner of their externalization. We do not consider this genius in an artist to be anything very different from that which is commonly termed his personality. "The intervention of genius," writes Mr. Woodberry, "has charged phenomena with something new, vital and trans-

forming, namely, with its own personality."[37] That which marks off the genius of the artist is at the same time the mark of his personality, as it is of his originality. For any mark that points to great intuitional power also shows us what is distinctive of the person possessing that power, and these two combined decide the originality. We agree with Brownson that originality does not consist alone in expressing things that were never expressed before. "The most peculiar and characteristic mark of genius is insight into subjects which are dark to ordinary vision," said Patmore,[38] and he should probably have added more explicitly: not always insight into subjects ordinarily dark but often a new view of a subject well known—"a fresh aspect of something old, not a discovery of something new," as Wright expressed it.[39] Guyau makes the "ensemble des idées et sentiments de son époque" constitute the matter of the artist, and he adds: "la marque de génie est précisément de trouver une forme nouvelle que la connaissance de la matière donnée n'aurait pas fait prévoir."[40]

In the above paragraphs almost nothing was said of restrictions to be laid on art. And in so far as the artistic activity is concerned there are practically no limitations. "The world of art," as Mr. Woodberry says, "is the place of the spirit's freedom; there the soul criticizes the world, accepts and rejects it, amends it, has its own will with it as if it were clay, and remakes it."[41] And Marshall says: "This art impulse is blindly instinctive in its simplicity, with no end in view at all beyond the completion of its work."[42] That may be true as far as the 'impulse' is concerned, but there are other considerations which the artist himself cannot neglect if he wishes to be successful. The artistic activity is only one side of art—the basic consideration, if you will, which distinguishes art from non-art. But no artist producing works is without the hope of having his art appreciated by others. Without an audience to which it is to address itself, art really has little reason for existing. Judging from this side, we can say, not

37 *Op. cit.*, p. 21.
38 *Principle in Art*, p. 44. London 1890.
39 Spencer's *Philosophy of Style*, p. 59. Boston 1895.
40 *Op. cit.*, p. 35.
41 *Op. cit.*, p. 30.
42 *Op. cit.*, p. 164.

without right, that a work of art is nothing but what it means to those who behold it, has little value beyond its meaning to the artist's fellowmen. The matter is not closed when we say that the artist's creative ability must surpass that of the ordinary man; for the work of art necessarily must be confined within reach of the receptive ability, if not of all men, always of some, and must be judged also from the manner in which it affects its beholders. This side of art must also be considered by every theory of aesthetics that aims at completeness. In fact, for the critic of art it is by far the more important side, and probably for this reason was emphasized so strongly by Brownson.

3.—Art in Its Effect

Art does not exist, then, merely as an activity on the part of the artist. The latter externalizes his intuitions for the purpose of communicating them to his fellowmen. His mental vision, his inner experience, has a special value for him, a value that also exists for others; and he produces his work of art in order to have his fellowmen experience what he saw or felt. The intuition communicated is always a single cross-section of life, a real or imaginary vision of some concrete instance of life. Even if the intuition is that of a general truth, of a universal principle of life, it is only under the guise of an individual manifestation, a concrete example, that art by its very nature can portray these general ideas or truths. Art in its form or symbols copies from nature; and as in nature, especially human nature, each individual action is the manifestation of an attitude of life underlying it, so also in art. The latter cannot avoid the issues of individual life. Whatever vision an artist communicates to his audience is accompanied by an attitude of life. It is this accompaniment of art that gives to it a mission, if we should really use the term. Brownson insisted very strongly on the individuality of art, and on the fact that, as a natural consequence of this, a work of art like every other human activity has a social, ethical bearing. Even if the inculcation of views is not the avowed purpose of the artist, this effect will always exist at least as an unconscious

accompaniment. "Art is a human activity," says Tolstoi, "consisting in this, that one man consciously, by means of certain external signs, hands on to others feelings he has lived through, and that other people are infected by these feelings, and also experience them."[43]

Tolstoi was strongly imbued with the ideal of the universal brotherhood of all men towards which everything should tend, and so he found that the task of art is "to make that feeling of brotherhood and love of one's neighbor, now attained only by the best members of society, the customary feeling and the instinct of all men."[44] Brownson in a similar way makes the purpose of art to be the uplift of society. We should rather say that the purpose of art is to communicate to men the visions or intuitions of minds that stand out above the rest by reason of what is termed genius, and that the question of the effect of these visions is a question of the ordinary laws of humanity and society. No one can justify the launching upon an innocent public of that which is undoubtedly subversive of the best interests of society and mankind. And the evil will be the greater, as Brownson too believes, because art is not professedly didactic. To influence is not the avowed purpose of the artist, but it is an unconscious concomitant of his work; and neither he nor his audience can avoid the issue, it lies in the nature of art and man. "Toutefois, l'art n'est pas seulement un ensemble de faits significatifs," writes Guyau well; "il est avant tout un ensemble de moyens suggestifs. Ce qu'il dit emprunte souvent sa principale valeur à ce qu'il ne dit pas, mais suggère, fait penser et sentir. Le grand art est l'art évocateur, qui agit par suggestion."[45]

This suggestive power of art is a factor that the critic must take cognizance of. And where other things are equal, that art must be considered greatest which, within the sphere of art, is productive of the noblest sentiments in the beholders, gives them the healthiest aspirations, incites in them sentiments most conducive to their own good and that of mankind. In this respect we certainly must agree with Brownson, though we cannot go so far as to claim with him that this ennobling power is

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43 *What Is Art?*, p. 43. New York 1899.
44 *Op. cit.*, p. 184.
45 *Op. cit.*, p. 65.

the criterion of the artistic quality or is the positive duty of art. Given works of artistic quality, the above consideration will help to decide upon the relative merit of the intuitions expressed, therefore of the works themselves as judged from the interests of mankind. But the principle as such we should rather consider negative than positive, arising from the relations of man to mankind, which enjoin that the individual refrain from activities injurious to society. Brownson's more positive attitude regarding the mission of art was interwoven with his idea of beauty as identical with the highest truth and the highest good, and was probably a deduction from his view that the expression of this beauty alone constituted true art.

Here it is that Brownson involves himself most apparently in contradictions, probably because he never attempted to synthesize his views on art and the beautiful. He makes art consist simply in an embodiment of the beautiful, and the beautiful is for him the criterion that distinguishes art from non-art. At the same time he claims that art has higher requisites than that of mere beauty. He also acknowledges that art may be good or bad; that art may portray a kind of beauty that is injurious to man and that does not fulfill the mission of art, namely, the promotion of the end of man. For this reason, he argues, such beauty is not true beauty, such art is not really art. True beauty is identical with the good and the true. True art then admits of no delight of the senses, although it addresses the intellect and the will only through the sensibility according to his own words. The outcome of such statements is that Brownson, while sometimes using the word beauty in a looser sense, considered only that to be real beauty which is identical with truth and morality. In this sense all art for him fulfills its mission by embodying the beautiful, and in this sense the beautiful is the criterion of all art.

With this last view of Brownson's we can agree no more than with his definition of beauty. We do not believe that the connection between beauty and art is a necessary one. The essence of art lies rather in the expression of an intuition, as we tried to explain above and as Croce emphasized so strongly. Croce rides over the question of beauty by stating that what we ordinarily mean by the term beautiful is really the sympathetic, while beauty is simply accuracy of expression. Thus all art,

since it is intuition or internal expression, is in so far also beautiful. But this is merely a perversion of terms. And however, it may agree with Croce's theories according to which aesthetics has no concern beyond the internal artistic activity, it is an unwarranted digression from the accepted meaning of words. The term beautiful in art is by common consent applied to that quality which renders artistic productions pleasing to, exerts an attractive charm on, the beholders. Of course, this is no real definition of beauty; it says little more than Plato's: beauty is that quality by which "all beautiful things become beautiful."[46]

The attempts to define the beautiful more closely are well-nigh innumerable. In general these attempts can be divided into two kinds: such as take an objective standpoint and such as take a subjective or psychological point of view. In accordance with the first class, some persons examine or analyse beautiful objectss and try to define beauty as a harmonious arrangement of parts, as unity amid variety; or they grow more profound and define it as identity of the conscious with the unconscious, "Zweckmässigkeit ohne Zweck," first stage of the absolute, etc. Another view of beauty belonging in part to this first class is entirely metaphysical. Beauty is a reflection of the eternal Beauty, or of some absolute ideal of beauty. Thus Plato said: "If there be anything beautiful other than absolute beauty, that can only be beautiful in as far as it partakes of absolute beauty."[47] A common expression of this view as found in treatises on ontology is: "The essence of beauty.....consists in that harmony whereby the beautiful object corresponds to its archetype, namely to the light of the intellect as showing forth the rule and measure of beauty."[48] Thus, too, Brownson claimed that beauty in things is a correspondence to, or participation in, an absolute beauty, identical with God. We have already stated that such a claim may show the tendency art is to take, but does not give any positive content to beauty. For the latter we must fall back upon our experiences with the world

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46 *Op. cit.*, i, 429.
47 *Loc. cit.*
48 Cardinal Zigliara, *Ontologia, Lib.* ii. c. ii. *art.* vii.—Quoted in Rickaby, *General Metaphysics*, p. 165. New York 1909.

surrounding us. And we arrive at it only by examining those objects that give us the impression of beauty.

Thus we are to led the second class of definitions, which views beauty psychologically as any quality producing pleasure or delight, "that quality or combination of qualities which affords keen pleaseure to the senses,.....which charms the intellectual or moral faculties, through inherent grace,..... which appeals to the aesthetic taste," as the dictionaries have it. Even if these are no real definitions of the beautiful, they at least afford us some standard to go by. And when we remember that the term beautiful is applied to objects of color, of sound, of speech, of thought, actions, affections, etc., we cannot but acquiesce with Reid who calls attention to the fact that all these objects have little in common except the power of delighting us.[49] Of course such a view emphasizes the subjective element of beauty. And Alison in consonance with his theory of association is careful to point out that not only individual habits of mind, but even the "temporary sensibility" of one's mind *hic et nunc* comes into play:[50] while Marshall says that pleasure is never permanent, it "is a quality which may attach to any element of consciousness; but not permanently."[51] Extremists of this view thus say that beauty is nothing but a subjective state of the individual beholder. But this is hardly tenable, since experience shows that there are beautiful objects which seem to strike at something permanent in human nature and afford pleasure to all mankind, that beauty is therefore a permanent quality of such objects. Here we agree with Brownson that the ultimate test of beauty in any concrete form is the 'universal mind of man,' the common judgment of man, and that the greatest test of it is time. The psychological analysis of beauty tells us also that the pleasure given by objects may arise from various sources, from the perfection of the symbols alone, from the thought alone, or from both. Hence we have the terms "sensuous beauty," "intellectual beauty." And they contain an explanation of the fact that a work may be beautiful under one aspect and not under another. Beauty as such,

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49 *Works*, p. 498.
50 *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste*, pp. 69-70. New York 1850.
51 *Op. cit.*, p. 149.

then, may in a work of art be in both external form and intuition, or in either one alone; or there may be no beauty since beauty does not belong to the essence of art. The latter is judged from the standpoint of artistic activity, in regard to which art demands the complete harmony, the inseparability in function of form and content.

However, art considered as a communication of the intuition to others finds in beauty not only a powerful aid, but one that is well-nigh indispensable. Of this we shall treat more explicitly later. Rarely is the artistic genius really admired and appreciated unles it presents what in some way or other appeals to human nature. Nor are men in general satisfied with a merely fleeting pleasure; and that beauty is always considered greatest which is most permanent and satisfies the noblest instincts of mankind—a beauty of which the poet well sings:

> There is a beauty that outlives the form
> That gives it birth, and lingers in the mind
> Through all the after years of peace and storm,
> A constant benediction, sweet and kind.[52]

After all has been said about the analysis of beauty, the most emphatic feature is that beauty contains an instinctive appeal to human nature. On account of this instinctive operation of beauty, in fact of all art, it is dangerous to set down conventional rules regarding it, as is so often done, unless these be understood simply as aides rather than rules. To examine past works of art and from them to establish inexorable rules is certainly to hamper the creative power of the artist, to check all posibility of advance, and makes for stagnation. We do not believe that all the resources of human nature and interest have been exhausted in the past or ever will be exhausted in the future; and the works of the past are valuable as guides only in so far as they show us what time has proved to be of permanent interest and value to human nature. To try the new is certainly a laudable undertaking. And the critics who rigorously test the new by the cenventions of the past alone are well characterized by Francis Thompson after his own fashion as men "who were for ever shearing the wild tresses of poetry between rusty

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52 David Morton, *Forum*, 57: 576.

rules, who could never see a literary bough project beyond the trim level of its day but they must lop it with a crooked criticism, who kept indomitably planting in the defile of fame the 'established conons' that had been spiked by poet after poet."[53]

At the same time we cannot sympathize with those who scorn conventions just because they are conventions, since they express what has withstood the critical mind of mankind for generations. Speaking of the function of criticism, Mr. Brownell mentions that the ultimate standards "arise insensibly in the mind of the cultivated public and spread in constantly widening circles. Mankind, once more, is wiser than any man."[54] So, too, several generations are wiser than one, and only works that have lasted can be said to contain something in them answering to the permanent element in human nature. "One man opposing another determines nothing," says Reynolds; "but a general union of minds, like a general combination of the forces of all mankind, makes a strength that is irresistible.[55] Bagehot concludes his estimate of Thackery with the words: "When the young critics of this year have gray hairs, their children will tell them what is the judgment of posterity upon Mr. Thackeray."[56] This principle is almost analogous to the present philosophy of progress according to which evolution goes on in various directions, although only the activities in the right direction will continue while the others will die out. Still the criterion of time should not be pushed too rigorously, but serve mainly to make us cautious in our judgments. For it matters little after all to one generation whether a work of art will endure in the future as long as it means something to the people of the present.

It is as a rule out of the present that the inspiration of art derives its source, as Brownson claims. And for that reason so many works are applauded by one generation only, while some new works, not of special contemporary interest, establish themselves only after a time, after the adage of 'truth will out' has asserted itself. The ultimate criterion of all art is its continued appreciation by mankind; and the element that produces this

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53 *Op. cit.*, iii, 15.
54 *Standards*, p. 149. New York 1917.
55 *Op. cit.*, p. 117.
56 *Literary Studies*, ii, 129. Everyman's Library.

cannot be other than a note sympathetic with human nature itself. Such, in fact, is the conclusion that many recent treatises touching on the subject arrive at. "Art resolves itself into two elements," writes Mr. Moulton: "interest of design, and human interest. The first lends itself readily to analytic treatment, but human interest will often defy analysis."[57] Just because this human interest defies complete analysis, it leaves a wide scope for the artist's activities and prevents the formulation of rules that dictate the confines of all future art. It is the varied expanse of this human interest that causes the approval of works of art in which there is little of beauty; that permits of the grotesque and even of the ugly in their places; that prompts one poet to sing:

> A sweet disorder in the dress,
> etc., etc.,
> Do more bewitch me than when art
> Is too precise in every part;[58]

and another to write of the "hot-house seclusion of beauty in a world which Nature has tempered by bracing gusts of ugliness;"[59] and that permits the philosopher to say: "Aesthetic psychoses are always pleasurable. But it cannot be claimed that all pleasures are aesthetic."[60] Again, if any "new art" fails to touch the general public, this is not so much because it breaks the conventional forms of art, but because it fails to express to its beholders by and through its form that which touches the heart-strings of mankind, which bears the stamp of true human interest. It is only the common judgment of humanity that finally distinguishes between what is merely individual and what is eccentric, and that tolerates a weakness in any work if overshadowed by good qualities, weighing all the multiple considerations arising in art for a final adjudication of the work. This common voice of men needs no defense, for it has always stood for that quality in art which expresses what is noblest in human nature, which has value as an incentive towards all

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57 *The Modern Study of Literature*, p. 379. Chicago (1915).
58 Robert Herrick, "Delight in Disorder."
59 Francis Thompson, *Op. cit.*, iii, 98.
60 Marshall, *Op. cit.*, p. 107.

that is good—a quality that can well be termed the spiritual worthiness of a work of art.[61]

In this spiritual worthiness and the human interest of art we find its final influence on beholders and their final source of appreciation. It is the element of human interest in any work of art that causes it to be well received by men; while its spiritual worthiness we should judge by the power it has towards giving to men worthy thoughts and aspirations. This spiritual worthiness we should set up as "the criterion of reason applied to the work of ascertaining value apart from mere attractiveness."[62] Every experience resulting from human interest is broadening, lifts the mind out of its narrow self; and every experience of what is ennobling brings new joy and value into life.

The faculty of art appreciation—generally called taste—is the faculty of detecting in a work of art the genuineness of the element that awakens human interest, and of the qualities that constitute its spiritual worthiness. As a first step towards exercising this taste, it is necessary to possess the faculty of repeating in oneself the intuition of the artist—a counterpart of the creative ability of the artist. Guyau divides the world into two classes: "les novateurs et les répétiteurs, c'est-à-dire les génies et le public, qui répète en lui-même par sympathie les états d'esprit, sentiments, émotions, pensées, que le génie a le premier inventés ou auxquels il a donné une forme nouvelle."[63] He concludes rightly that the "instinct novateur" and the "instinct imitateur" exist both in the genius and in the ordinary man, that the one dominates in the former and the other in the latter. In the same way Croce rightly stresses the universal existence of intuitional power in man. And this power, while it is creative of new expressions in the genius, is in the ordinary man the faculty of reproducing these expressions when the external form is seen. The primary aspect of taste is then a milder form of the artistic power. The similarity and ultimate identity of taste and genius in this sense was already hinted at by Reynolds in his *Discourses on Art*,[64] and now

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61 Cf. Brownell, *Criticism*, p. 59. New York 1914.
62 Brownell, *ibid.*
63 *Op. cit.*, p. 43.
64 P. 102.

finds general acceptance. However, as some men have the intuitional power only in a minimum quantity; and as only some have enough of it combined with the requisite erudition and culture to appreciate works of art that are the results of the profoundest genius: so there will always be those who can appreciate no art, and others who can appreciate only certain productions of art. But the accepted meaning of taste does not refer only to the ability of recognizing the presence of artistic activity. Its further and almost greater task is to judge what art contains the element of permanent human interest, what possesses the greatest spiritual worthiness.

4.—The Good, the True, and the Beautiful

So far we have said nothing of the relation between morality and art, between the good, the true, and the beautiful—matters so emphatically brought to the foreground by Brownson. As has already been mentioned these matters are vital to a synthesis of his artistic principles, and any disagreement with Brownson's view of them necessitates the positing also of other principles of art. It is therefore only in connection with the preceding paragraphs that we can discuss the relations of art to the beautiful, the good, and the true as they were set forth in the first part of this dissertation.

There are those who claim that the artistic impulse is a blind impulse, one for which the artist is not responsible, and that art can therefore be judged only by the rules of art, not by those of ethics, etc. But this is viewing art only from one side. The artist may not be responsible for the intuitions that come to him, but he is responsible for the externalization of those intuitions, which is a matter of choice with him. This externalizing, being a free act, cannot but be amenable to the laws of all free acts, whether the laws be social, political, or moral. If morality means anything in this world, then its meaning extends to all of man's free activities, and works of art contrary to it must be considered injurious to the individual nature and to society as a whole. All human faculties are for the good of man. And he who rules morality out of the sphere of art must, to be consistent, rule it out of life altogether. The question then becomes not so much one of the amenableness of

art to morality but of the latter's right to exist. The controversy between adversaries on this point has often grown bitter because enthusiasts on the one side give the impression that morality should dictate what is art and what is not. Such a claim is really more than a mere exaggeration of facts; it is false, for the rules of morality cannot decide what is art and what not. The presence of artistic activity, of creativeness, in any work must be decided by other standards, we should say is decided instinctively; and ethics can only decide whether the art is morally good or bad. Ethics then determines the science of art, as Brownson says—but not when this science judges of the creative quality in a work, of the presence of artistic genius. It becomes a factor only when the spiritual worthiness of the work is to be adjudged. Brownson himself was not unaware of this. At times he too spoke of art as good or bad, though he invariably and oftener turned back to his theory of calling only that beautiful which points directly towards the supernatural, as we mentioned above.

Ruskin, indeed, says that the fine arts can be directed only towards perfecting the ethical state, but he stresses the word 'fine' more than that of 'art': "It is impossible to direct fine art to an immoral end, except by giving it characters unconnected with its fineness, or by addressing it to persons who cannot perceive it to be fine."[65] Croce defends the absolute independence of art from morality despite the fact that he says the externalizing of an intuition is a matter of choice. His opinion is closely followed and well expressed by Mr. Spingarn in relation to poets: "The poet's only moral duty, as a poet, is to be true to his art, and to express his vision of reality as well as he can. If the ideals enunciated by poets are not those which we admire most, we must blame not the poet but ourselves: in the world where morals count we have failed to give them the proper material out of which to rear a noble edifice. No critic of authority now tests literature by the standards of ethics."[66] But the poet always acts also as man. Or does genius make him less a man? The last sentence of this quotation is easily answered: As to the presence of artistic genius in

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65 *Works*, xx, 47. London 1903.
66 *Creative Criticism*, pp. 33-4. New York 1917.

it, No; as to its value to mankind, Yes—it is being done continually. Lange in his *Wesen der Kunst* impatiently declaims against those who wish to banish the nude from art, and gives the analogy of forbidding the use of a knife to a person because he could cut his throat with it.[67] To pursue an analogy that is not too accurate, one could call attention to the fact that some persons will almost invariably and certainly injure themselves seriously with a knife, and that some knives can be so sharp as to be dangerous to everybody. In general it is necessary to distinguish between what is suggestive of the immoral and what may be a source of temptation to some. To exclude from art everything that may be a temptation to some is an extreme view and would, if pushed consistently, take away from art all of life. What would remain?

Brownson vigorously denounces Schiller for trying in the *Aesthetic Letters* to substitute aesthetics for morality, and for assigning to beauty the task of raising us to a higher moral state. But he seems to have misunderstood Schiller, who apparently never intended aesthetics to do away with the moral law, never set up the beautiful as our rule of right and wrong. Schiller states repeatedly that the object of aesthetics is to rid us of the friction between the impulse of the senses and that of reason by removing the lower impulses of the former and giving us a more ready disposition towards virtue, and to direct the emotional element upwards.[68] Moreover, Schiller well recognized the danger lurking in an appeal to the emotional element of man, and acknowledged that past experience was discouraging to the success of his theory.[69] Schiller's claim does not assert all that Brownson thought. But even as it is here modified to a form closely allied to that of Shaftesbury and others, it demands too much of art. The very appreciation of higher moral beauty in art presupposes a moral ideal in the beholder, as Brownson rightly objected, and the strong guidance of reason. And this moral beauty, dependent on reason and deriving all its strength from it, can annihilate the

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67 Vol. ii., p. 158. Berlin 1901.

68 "Über den moralischen Nutzen ästhetischer Sitten," *Werke*, 12. Bd., s. 239, and s. 241, 242: also "Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen," 24. Brief, *Werke*, 12. Bd., s. 86; 4. Brief, *ibid.*, s. 10.

69 *Werke*, 12. Bd., s. 239; and s. 34 (10. Brief).

lower sense-impulse no more than reason itself can. At the same time it should not be denied that art, by producing higher ideals in all their beauty and appeal, can diminish the strength of the sense-impulse and thus bring the emotional element in closer conformity to the dictates of reason. A second objection that Brownson advanced against Schiller's claim is, that ideal beauty is not real and therefore not operative. Though not frequent, a hasty pronouncement of this kind is somewhat characteristic of Brownson in his enthusiasm. Of course the ideal as such is real in the intellect and often supplies the sole motive for action. Even the insane man's vagary does that. Brownson himself expects his ideal of beauty to be operative and work towards the uplift of man. Again he says that the mere cognition of beauty is not sufficient to stimulate man. However, the very perception of beauty is ordinarily more than mere cognition; it generally includes also a stimulative appeal to instinctive human nature.

The distinction that Brownson makes between secular and religious art is hardly adequate and applies only to his own theory of art. He claims that secular art must give the natural in its direct bearing to the supernatural, else it will corrupt; and cites the saying of the Gospel: Who is not with me is against me. But this saying refers to the general stand a man takes towards the supernatural; it does not require that every action of ours have a positive religious bearing, and does not condemn those actions of man that merely do not oppose the religious ideal. Applied to many actions it is rather negative than positive. The Decalogue itself consists mainly of negative injunctions. It was consistency with his identification of the true, the beautiful, and the good, that caused Brownson to apply the rule positively to every work of art.

We have already mentioned that Brownson's ideal of beauty as identical with the supreme Beauty, Truth, and Goodness gives us no positive content of the beautiful; and that as a consequence it was necessary for him to gauge beauty simply by truthfulness and moral goodness for which reason furnishes principles. The ideas of the beautiful that men possess are the result of experience. The perception of the bautiful is instinctive, and it ordinarily makes its appeal to human nature immediately, without the aid of reflection. The more the beautiful, how-

ever, appeals to what is noblest in human nature, the more closely consonant will it also be with the dictates of reason, the more will it approach to identity with the true and the good. Experience shows us that there are also many beautiful forms that are morally altogether indifferent. In fact what is morally good may appear in an ugly form and vice versa. We find that Brownson adverted to this when he called art the embodiment of the beautiful and divided art into the morally good and the morally bad art. And we have already called attention to the contradiction between this view and his claim regarding the identity of the good and the beautiful. The identity of the true and the beautiful must be considered in a similar light to that of the good and the beautiful. In ultimate ontology the true, the good, and the beautiful are identical with the Absolute Being. But Brownson himself has said that this world is only a faint reflection of the Supreme Being. Not everything that is true is beautiful to the eyes of man. Art need not always strive to possess that higher truth which is identical with goodness and which points directly to the supernatural, the highest beauty. The only truth required for art is consonance with human reason, the absence of that which would be repulsive to reason and which would tend to destroy the element of human interest in art. Thus truth is called by Jungmann 'philosophical': "Es ist, wie wir gesagt haben, nicht nothwendig, dass das was die hedonischen Künste in ihren Werken vorführen, objektives, wirkliches Seyn habe; aber dasselbe muss immer als wirklich seyend gedacht werden können, es muss vollkommen und allseitig möglich, es muss 'philosophisch wahr' sein."[70]

Just as Brownson judged the beautiful by its identity with the true and the good, so he designated no special faculty to which the beautiful addresses itself, though he did for the true and the good. He does sometimes claim that beauty makes its appeal to our sensibility, but this can be done only by that beauty which is directly perceived by the senses, or rather through the senses. At other times he assigns to the imagination the task of perceiving beauty. However, the accepted office of the imagination is that of creating and reproducing

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70 *Op. cit.*, 2. Bd., s. 109.

mental images or intuitions. It is precisely to the intellect under the aspect of the imagination that we should attribute the creation or recognition (reproduction) of the intuitions constituting the essence of art. The appeal of beauty does not follow necessarily upon the reproduction in our mind of mental images, and does not finally rest with the imagination. As it is instinctive, and as beauty may be merely of the senses or merely of the intellect or of both together, it may happen that the first sight of a work thrills us, but that the absence of adequate content, or of sufficient beauty of content, reacts as a damper. The faculty to which this appeal of the beautiful is made is commonly designated the aesthetic sense. An appeal to it, as any appeal exercised by an element of human interest, is almost invariably accompanied by emotions; hence the emotional element so often mentioned in connection with art. Hence, too, the statement that art addresses the intellect through the emotions, though these may be excited as well by intellectual as by sensuous beauty.

If we have not given beauty a necessary connection with art, we must nevertheless acknowledge that it constitutes by far the most powerful factor, and only in rare instances a not quite indispensable factor, of the element of human interest in art. It is chiefly through the appeal of its beauty that a work of art attracts beholders and thus causes them to examine it more closely and to respond to its inspirations. All the elements that address the faculties of man can present motives of human interest. Truth and goodness are not less powerful factors because the main attractive force in art is beauty. Brownson well emphasized that art must address itself to the whole of man. We have spoken of reason, will, and the aesthetic sense as so many faculties of the soul, but we do not mean that these are actually separate faculties. "This fourfold activity of the soul," says Brother Azarias who includes here a religious sense, "does not correspond to any four special faculties. It represents rather four distinct fields upon which all the faculties operate."[71] Hence even in art none of these activities is wholly separable. The human interest that true art arouses demands at least that none of the activities be contradicted. If the

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71 *Op cit.*, p. 4.

aesthetic sense is addressed to the entire neglect of the others, the artistic content will become abnormal and develop into sentimentalism. The greatest spiritual worthiness, too, will be found in that art which best satisfies the whole of the human heart, contradicting neither the demands of reason as judge of truth nor the dictates of the moral sense as judge of the good. From this follows the abnormal attitude of those who try to exclude from art the elements of truth and goodness as entirely irrelevant. We have already quoted Mr. Woodberry as saying that genius charges phenomena with its own personality. He continues: "....the contents of the work of art, its meaning, is constituted of the artists personality expressed therein. What a lean and diminished personality that would be from which intellectual and moral elements were excluded!"[72]

Brownson's principles of aesthetics did not arise from a mere desire to have a sound ethics guide art right towards the end of man. They form rather a system built a priori on his idea of the essence of the ideal beautiful. He considered this ideal to be given by God to the mind of man, and therefore appealed to the common and universal mind of man as a criterion. It is to this appeal to the common and universal mind that we also have had recourse in order to find out what is of true interest to mankind at large. The diversity of tastes is proverbial. There are so many elements operative towards human interest that the individual is rarely capable of absolute certainty. The errors of individual judgment are canceled by the judgment of the group. This would seem to make the judgment of art altogether empirical; but there is a permanent element in human nature which is more easily felt than defined. Just because it is indefinite, it leaves unlimited possibilities open to art, possibilities that will never be exhausted.

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[72] *Op. cit.*, pp. 21-2.

CHAPTER VI

CRITIQUE OF THE LITERARY PRINCIPLES

1.—Literature

The principles of art contained in the preceding pages naturally find application to literature as one of the forms of art. It will be our task now to give these principles their particular application in the field of literature in conjunction with the views that Brownson advanced in this regard.

Brownson's view of literature does not consider the first phase of art mentioned above, that of artistic activity, but treats literature merely as an influential power, from the standpoint of 'art in its effect'. A recent development of this viewpoint says:

> The act of reading has thus taken on a new dignity, as literature, in the evolution of critical theories, has become a process rather than a product, something that takes place rather than something which has been made. Literature in this sense is no finished material object—a pill to be swallowed by the reader, or a sugar-plum to be eaten by him. Rather is it a great continuous activity, which goes on through and by the reader, his participation constituting its final stage, as organically related to it as the writer's function itself."[73]

This view judges literature only by its value to the individual reader, and calls attention especially to the resulting fact that what is literature for one reader is not necessarily literature for another. Such a statement deserves most serious consideration by all critics, for the view it expresess should be a main factor in all criticism. But in stressing the individual it leaves too much out of consideration that there is a common element in human nature, that there is after all a 'human nature,' not merely a group of individual and disparate natures. Again, this view does not distinguish between literature as an art and literature as any expression in writing; and

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73 Gertrude Buck, *The Social Criticism of Literature*, pp. 19-20. Yale U. Press 1916.

it need not do so, for its test is applicable to all writing. However, we are here concerned with literature as a form of art and therefore need a criterion by which to distinguish writings that come under the caption of art from those that do not. Brownson, as we mentioned above, considers literature primarily as something 'specifically related to man as a moral, religious, and social being,' as an effect. This is really the second step, the first being to determine what is literary art, what writings have the stamp of artistic activity in them.

Falling back on our principles of art, we must consider literature in our sense as the expression of an intuition, of a mental vision; of an intuition, moreover, in some way above that of the ordinary man. It must reveal to the reader most emphatically a distinct viewpoint of something old or a view of something new, in an exterior form that adequately mirrors its content. Thus literature proper is separated from the philosophical treatise which expresses a chain of reasoning—the logical concept of Croce—and from the book of commonplaces.[74] Of course it must be remembered with Croce that art may also contain reasoning, or the logical concept, that the two fields of the concept and of the intuition often meet, and that then the ultimate decision depends on whether the concept or the intuition prevails. Besides, a literary work cannot be apprehended at a glance as some other forms of art can; and the mental vision of the artist is only completely externalized and apprehended in time; i. e., when the end of the work has been reached. It is therefore doubly necessary that the writer keep before his mind, while externalizing part after part, his one purpose, his intuition, to which all parts are to be subservient. The demand for unity in art or literature, for coherence, etc., is nothing but the demand for the expression of a single vision

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74 Newman writes: "Literature expresses, not objective truth, as it is called, but subjective; not things, but thoughts. Now this doctrine will become clearer by considering another use of words which does relate to objective truth, or to things; which relates to matters, not personal, not subjective to the individual, but which, even were there no individual man in the whole world to know them or to talk about them, would exist still. Such objects become the matter of Science, and words indeed are used to express them, but such words are rather symbols than language, and however many we use, and however we may perpetuate them by writing, we never could make any kind of literature out of them, or call them by that name." *Idea of a University*, p. 274. New York 1905.

or intuition in any work of art. "In literary as in all other art, structure is all-important," says Pater, "felt, or painfully missed, everywhere—that architectural conception of work, which foresees the end in the beginning and never loses sight of it, and in every part is conscious of all the rest, till the last sentence does but with undiminished vigour unfold and justify the first"—and this he calls "the necessity of mind in style."[75] We should rather call it the necessity of mind in art, flowing from the fact that art is the externalization of an intuition, a mental vision. And we would judge the artistic quality of any literary work just by this intuition rather than by any effect the work has on man or men. The greater the intuitional power of a writer displayed in it, or the more the intuition expressed in it ranks above that of the ordinary man, the higher is the position which it takes as an expression of artistic activity, as a work of genius.

Intimately connected with the question of the artistic intuition is that of form, the external expression of the intuition. Brownson, as we saw before, considered the form negligible and the content all-important. But the content and the form in art are really inseparable: the first determines the second, the second reveals the first. The symbols, here words, that make up the form all have a conventional meaning, and every word expresses and idea. If nevertheless the words convey nothing but incongruities to the mind, it is not so much because of a defective form, as of the lack of an intuition or mental vision on the part of the writer. Here again, as before, it is necessary to remember that sufficient mastery of the tools of externalization is presupposed, that sufficient mastery of language is not so much the essence of literature as an indispensable condition. Brownson says that form should be made as beautiful as possible because what is worth doing at all is worth doing well. But beauty of form has no value apart from the content to be expressed, nor has any other so-called quality of style. The form, or style, should reflect as faithfully as possible the intuition or mental vision the author has. Brownson seems to consider the style as something superimposed upon the content, independent of it; and the reason for this is that he

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75 *Op. cit.*, p. 18.

considered literature only in its effect and not in the first place as the expression of an artistic intuition. The dependence of form on content on the other hand, which Croce so emphasized, was applied by him also to language. Croce points out that poor writing is really a poor thinking out, and that clear speech means simply clear apprehension. The immediate dependence of style on thought was brought out long ago by Newman:

> Thought and speech are inseparable from each other. Matter and expression are parts of one: style is a thinking out into language. This is what I have been laying down, and this is literature; not things, not the verbal symbols of things; not on the other hand mere words; but thoughts expressed in language, ...the mere dealer in words cares little or nothing for the subject which he is embellishing, but can paint and gild anything whatever to order; whereas the artist, whom I am acknowledging, has his great or rich visions before him, and his only aim is to bring out what he thinks or what he feels in a way adequate to the thing spoken of, and appropriate to the speaker.[76]

What, indeed, is a flowery style but the externalization of imaginative thought, what is a grotesque style but the externalization of grotesque conceptions? "We still hear talk of the 'grand style'," writes Mr. Spingarn, "and essays on style continue to be written, like the old 'arts of poetry' of two centuries ago. But the theory of styles has no longer a real place in modern thought; we have learned that it is no less impossible to study style as separate from the work of art than to study the comic as separate from the work of the comic artist."[77]

The proper view of style is then to consider it a mirror of thought. But does not this contradict our claim above; namely, that the essence of art, the artistic activity, is not reasoning but intuition? We think not. In identifying the intuition with expression in art, we referred with Croce to internal expression. This does not mean that any work of art exists in the mind in all its details as later externalized, but that the content of the work exists there in its essential features—art emphasizes the essential, as Mr. Brownell says—

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[76] *Op. cit.*, pp. 276, 285.
[77] *Op. cit.*, p. 31.

and exists there clearly, since this intuition is a full, immediate turning of the mind on any object. The externalization generally requires a working out in detail of this intuition; reflection and thought are rarely dispensed with in giving the exterior form to an intuition.

What we have said so far regarding literature is all we should require for art in its primary phase of the expression of artistic activity, for writing to be ranked as literary art—an underlying intuition externalized in a form of sufficient workmanship every part of which tends to mirror this artistic vision of the author.

As with art in general, we cannot see how literature thus considered has any further mission than that of fulfilling the writer's purpose; namely, to communicate a vision, an inner experience to mankind, which the writer considers worth communicating. However, when we view literature as a work of art set before the public, not merely as a product of artistic genius but as a work naturally influencing those who read it, we certainly agree with Brownson that literature must accord with the purpose of human existence like every other activity. Our only contention is, just as with art above, that this standard of judgment does not tell us what is literature and what is not. As Brownson points out, a work of literature cannot be separated from its surroundings and must be considered a strong moulding factor in life, since it will necessarily have an influence on readers. Hence arises a duty on the part of literature not to oppose the good of mankind. This duty, as with art, is negative rather than positive and flows from the very essence of life. Beyond this, who is to decide what special purpose literature must pursue? Enumerations are frequently made of specific lines along which literature must serve mankind. Rightly understood they are merely an enumeration of some of the possibilities of literature; and if more than this is intended, if they are set up as restrictive laws, they only serve to hamper the freedom of artistic activity. However, they are alweys useful in judging of the merit or rank of different literary productions, in helping to decide which production comes nearest to fulfilling the possibilities of literature. These 'purposes' ought to follow from the nature of literature and art, and we should call an enumeration of them incomplete if any sources of human

interest are omitted, any factors that men take into consideration when judging of the merit of a literary work.

Brownson correctly enunciated the principle that literature merely must avoid everything that is against the end of man, and need do no more; but he frequently went beyond it himself. He was careful not to demand positive instruction of the literary artist, though he never excluded instruction altogether from literature. He contradicts himself, however, when he condemns all literature that merely satisfies the literary taste of readers. After all, innocent pleasure is a worthy aim and not to be despised. Besides, it is in the very essence of all literature or art that it conveys some knowledge, however small, of human nature and of life. Works that serve merely for pleasure surely cannot be excluded from literature. On the contrary, as Bagehot says, "in a state of high civilization it is no simple matter to give multitudes a large and healthy enjoyment."[78] Still, to literary works that give mere enjoyment, such as leave no effect whatever on the reader after they are laid aside, we should assign the lowest place as art, giving a higher place to works the more they combine with the element of human interest that of spiritual worthiness. All works of literary art, in order to reach their audience, must contain some element that is of interest to the hunman race. As we said above about art in general, this element may be supplied by beauty of thought, beauty of form, greatness of intuitive power displayed, force of truth expresed, even technical skill of the writer, etc., but generally by the manner in which these are balanced in a work.[79] The greater the appeal that a work makes through any element of human intreest to what is noblest in human nature, in other words, the greater the spiritual worthiness of any work, the higher does it stand in the realm of literary art. It was this spiritual worthiness that Brownson demanded in a high degree in all literature. And that he excluded works from the realm of art that did not have a positive appeal to what is the ideal relation of man to man and to God, was due to enthusiasm

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78 *Op. cit.*, ii, 226.

79 Compare with Quiller-Couch who makes 'persuasiveness' a quality of writing as of all art and says that it embraces all the other qualities, "all in short that.....may be summed up under the word Charm." *On the Art of Writing*, p. 42. New York 1916.

for his cause, which made spiritual worthiness consist entirely in supernatural worth. Art considered as the artistic activity did not exist for him apart from this supernatural value, or even apart from the work as affecting mankind in any manner. The criterion of ethical uplift that he used does not tell us how to distinguish literary from non-art, as we have already indicated. If we take another criterion he mentioned, that literature should move and please rather than convince, we do not get much further, since pleasing in no way excludes convincing. It is necessary therefore to make properly the distinction between artistic activity and the value of a work to mankind. The former alone decides what works are to be considered literary art. The spiritual worthiness is a second, though not a secondary, consideration, and cannot suffice as the sole criterion of literary or any other art.

2.—The Sociological Conception of Literature

Brownson's idea of literature as a powerful sociological factor is fully in accordance with his view of art as tending to raise man towards his Creator. If all art should elevate man, then surely this elevation is doubly the duty of literature as the latter is so intimately connected with the life of man. But is literature so closely interwoven with society, as Brownson claims, that it arises altogether out of the needs of the times, out of the social fermentation that is in the people for the time being? Is it true that the times create the men? The question is probably not wholly solvable, and would be of little importance if there were not persons who contend that literature must spring from the thought of its day or be condemned. Arnold inclines to this opinion, but checks himself cautiously: "Now in literature,....the elements with which the creative power works are ideas; the best ideas on every matter which literature touches, current at the time; at any rate we may lay it down as certain that in modern literature no manifestation of the creative power not working with these can be very important or fruitful." And later he adds: "For the creation of a masterwork of literature two powers must concur, the power of the man and the power of the moment."[80] Of these two, we consid-

80 *Essays Literary and Critical*, pp. 3, 4. Everyman's Library.

er, of course, the power of the man, the artistic genius, as the only indispensable requisite of an artistic work; and we hold that the nature of the content of the artistic intuition is secondary, provided only that the intuition be above that of the ordinary mind. But the question as enunciated by Brownson is one of fact rather than of law, and therefore less important. In general it is most natural for the literary artist to find his inspiration in the thought that pervades the age, as that is the atmosphere which he breathes, and as that always contains an element not only of special interest at his time but also of permanent human interest. The spirit and the thought of the day lie closest to hand, and are therefore most likely to offer an inspiration to the creative power of the artist.

The close union between literature and society Brownson emphasizes as twofold; and if the origin of literature from society as such is not so important a matter, this does not hold of the effect of literature on society. The question is not one of the presence of artistic intuition, but of art in its influence, of literature as a powerful factor in the formation of views of life. As such it has well been called "a living activity.....a genuine function of the social body," and "a primary means by which the race advances."[81] The position of literature in human progress, as a formulator or popularizer of thought, certainly cannot be stressed too much since it is in the very essence of art that such an effect is present. The critic, the man who stands as judge of the value of any work, of its meaning to mankind, must make this one of his chief considerations; and much harm would be avoided if the influence of art and literature were more generally kept in mind. Brownson himself in his younger days advocated that the adjustment of the disparity between classes, and similar questions, be a prime object of literature, thus recalling Tolstoi's idea of art as a teacher of the common brotherhood of man. However in his later writings, he takes a correcter view and tempers his appeals for the uplift of man with the caution that such effects on the part of literature are due rather to its indirect influence. Still this view is not altogether in accordance with his plea that the only mission of literature is the advance of the human race.

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81 Gertrude Buck, *Op. cit.*, pp. 31, 40.

For why should literature or art work only indirectly towards what is its avowed direct mission?

Since literature derives its influence from the fact that it exerts an appeal on readers, it is paramount for the welfare of man that this appeal be not made to the lower instincts, but to the higher and nobler sentiments in man. The latter Brownson defines simply as those sentiments that are common to universal human nature, and he identifies them with the criterion of good taste, and the ideal that is identical with the highest True, Good, and Beautiful. The connection here is obvious between his literary and aesthetic principles, and enough has been said on the matter in the preceding chapter.

Brownson pleads not only against catering to the popular instincts, as he calls them, but against any spirit that will tend towards discontent and social unrest. Primarily he speaks up for a joyous view of life, for the picturing of not only the depressing side of life. And surely he is right. Even if a work has all the earmarks of literary art, do these make up for the depressing effects of so many productions on all that is noble in human nature? After all their value to mankind is that of art as an influence; and the spiritual worthiness of a work depends on its ability to impart higher aspirations and a correcter view of life, one more conducive to the good of the individual and of society.

In pleading for a correct view of life Brownson is careful not to exact a life that is too ideal to be real. Of all art literature is most intimately connected with life; and by its very nature it is capable of giving more comprehensive views of life than the other forms of art. Hence the eternal question of realism and idealism in art is particularly applicable to literature. Brownson modifies his statement that all of life is the subject matter of art by the restriction that the influence on the readers must always be wholesome. However, this very restriction is in part a contradiction of the first statement. In the artistic activity there is nothing to restrict the subject-mater of art, but in the value of art to mankind there is. The excuse of those who say that evil exists in life and therefore has its place in art is true only if properly understood. The evil that exists in life exists there, not with the approbation of human nature, but against the nobler instincts

of man. And Brownson rightly pointed out that those who paint vice and crime without limit as a rule do so with approbation, as if that were the only side of real life. Such a view is not real in the sense of being purely objective, as its advocates would have us believe.

In the characters that occur in literature, Brownson is careful not to demand too much idealism. It is not in accordance with human nature to be absolutely faultless, and characters that are made too perfect will lack the element of human interest and fail to appeal to mankind. Much discussion occurs at times as to whether characters in literature should be 'types' or 'individuals'—apparently to no purpose. For is not each individual in life one of a type, with just enough of the individual to distinguish him from the others of the type? A character in literature that is purely a type, a whole class as such, will strike us as unreal, and the type-character must always be individual enough to be possible and to appeal to human nature. "Lady Macbeth, like all in Shakespeare, is a class individualized," says Coleridge;[82] and this she had to be in order to prove as interesting as Shakespeare has made her. But when Brownson goes so far as to exclude national idiosyncrasies from characters, we cannot agree with him, for they form just one of the most valuable assets of human nature, and a permanent element of human interest. Even personal eccentricities are wholly in place when they are incompatible with human nature. These Thompson describes well as "incongruities which are felt by the reader to have a whimsical hidden keeping with the congruities of the character, which enhance the consent of the general qualities by an artistically modulated dissent; which just lend, and no more than lend, the ratifying seal of Nature to the dominating regularities of characterization."[83]

Regarding the relation of literature to ethical principles and morality, little need be said, as it was treated sufficiently in the preceding chapter. In his statements about literature, Brownson was less rigorous than in his view of art in general, and he recognized the purely negative obligation that literature has with regard to morality. He even concedes that literary

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82 *Op. cit.*, p. 162.
83 *Op. cit.*, pp. 98-9.

products are free to display only natural virtues—which still more contradicts the view he expressed so often that all art that does not point to the supernatural is corrupting. His exclusion of all direct discussion of religion in literature and his admission of nothing more than simply a Christian atmosphere in literature is based on a reason of its own. It was brought out mainly in his utterances on novels and will be treated later in this chapter.

3.—The Author

That the literary man is a director of the thoughts of the reading public is surely true to some extent, and is most natural, too, as Brownson says. 'To some extent,' we say, for it is also true in part that the reading public is instrumental in deciding the trend that many a writer takes, and that many readers seek out the works that they know will most please their opinions. That there is a vast difference in the mental endowments of men cannot be denied; and it is therefore unavoidable that an aristocracy of learning, to use Brownson's phrase, should exist. As Dryden says in his *Religio Laici*:

> The few by Nature formed, with learning fraught,
> Born to instruct, as others to be taught.

That anyone endowed with special gifts use these gifts for the benefit of all mankind is well and good; but that he must so use them would seem to imply that the individual exists only for the community. There is ordinarily no obligation to employ such gifts for others. All that can be exacted from such a one outside of emergencies is that he does not use his gifts to the detriment of others. The literary artist may have great inner experiences, but he is not bound to externalize them. If, however, he does externalize, then he is bound by the laws of the human race like all other mortals. It is in this sense that we would apply Brownson's saying, that the artist lives not for himself but for the people. Whatever motives he may have in producing his work, his duty to consider it in the relation of a power and influence on his fellowmen—not only as the expression of his intuition therefore, but as a living force in the world—cannot be eschewed.

On accout of this phase of art, it is necessary for the true artist or writer to have a wide knowledge of human nature and a deep sympathy with things human, as Brownson says. And success will hardly come to a writer unless he is what Wordsworth demands of the poet, that he be one "who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind."[84] The artist's character, of which Brownson speaks, concerns us only in so far as it is visible in his work, and is then judged as a quality of the work itself.

Brownson insists strongly that the literary artist, before commencing any work, should have a clear conception of his particular mission, which must be in accordance with the general mission of literature. With eloquent enthusiasm he describes this special mission as one for which the writer should count it 'honorable to live and sweet to die.' This is certainly a high concept of the artist's mission, and one that would be well worth considering by those who feel the call to write. Whether a writer's inspiration comes from a task he sets himself to perform, or not, is no matter for discussion here. Despite his insistence on the mission that the scholar must define for himself, Brownson seems to place as a first requisite the presence of an inspiration; and this is in accordance with the general idea of art. An artist is prompted to externalize by the intuition he has, the inspiration; and his prime purpose is then to communicate to others his own mental experience, while joined with this, or rarely wanting if at all, is the expectancy that this experience will mean something to others, will be to them a source of pleasure and benefit. In this way it is evident, as we claimed before, that the duty towards uplifting mankind, so far as real obligation is concerned, is negative, one of refrainment rather than of positive tendency. If this be borne in mind, the ennobling tendency will nevertheless be present by the very fact that the experience communicated is that of a genius, of a mind of more than ordinary visionary power. Thus the 'instruction' in art is implicit rather than explicit. Brownson also speaks of 'a necessity upon' the writer, a soul swelling with great thoughts craving for utterance; and

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84 Preface to the Lyrical Ballads, *Works*, x, 18. Boston 1909.

this is nothing but the artistic intuition that seeks to be externalized. No matter whether the content of the intuition is entirely new or not, no matter whence it arose, it must become the author's own before he can produce a work of art and not a mere imitation. The more creative the act of intuition is in substance or viewpoint, the more original will the writer be and the more will his work have the stamp of his personality. This is the mark of his rank as artist.

4.—Poetry, the Novel, and History

Since Brownson calls prose 'properly the vehicle of instruction,' he must, to be consistent, assign the term poetical to those prose-forms whose first purpose is not to instruct but to please and move, this being the aim of poetry. It would have been better to convert the proposition and make it read: the proper, or natural, vehicle of instruction is prose; for thus prose is left free to perform other offices also. The distinction between prose and poetry has often led to confusion, and the chief reason seems to be that both terms are applied now to content now to form. All thought that is above the ordinary, that is highly imaginative or emotional, can be called poetical; while commonplace thoughts, expresed with no imagination or feeling, are called prosaic even when in the conventional form of poetry. "Much that we call poetry is but polite verse," says Emerson.[85] And Shelley says absolutely: "The distinction between poets and prose writers is a vulgar error."[86] In general usage the term prose refers oftener to the form; and when a content is called prosaic, the term is used opprobriously and implies that the content has not risen to the level of art, of the artistic intuition. On the other hand, the term poetical, also used of prose, refers oftener to the content than to the form; and this is as it ought to be since the content, the intuition, decides the degree of artistic activity in any work, and is the factor that alone determines the form.

The position which Brownson gives to poetry at the head of

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85 *Letters and Social Aims*, p. 73. Boston 1888.

86 *Defense of Poetry*, p. 9. Boston 1891. This essay itself, as Thompson's on Shelley, to give another example, adds strength to the assertion.

all arts is generally agreed to by critics. The symbols used in poetry are those most natural and most intelligible and expressive to man, and poetry has practically no limits assigned to its activity. "Poetry thus makes immortal all that is best and most beautiful in the world," says Shelley; "it arrests the vanishing apparitions which haunt the interlunations of life, and veiling them or in language or in form, sends them forth among mankind, bearing sweet news of kindred joy to those with whom their sisters abide—abide, because there is no portal of expression from the cavern of the spirit which they inhabit into the universe of things."[87] The symbols of the other arts are more limited in their possibilities; or, if they are fully as expressive to the artists, are certainly not so even to the more enlightened beholders. Sometimes, however, we may judge wrongly that the content of these arts is less definite to us because we cannot translate it from its proper symbols into those of speech. All art is the product of the intellect, and, as Mr. Brownell says, the importance of such work is its intellectual connotation.[88] If this is true of art in general, it is particularly true of poetry whose symbols are those most significant and most familiar to the intellect.

Hence the truth of all such statements is evident, that claim for poetry a more definite or tangible message to the human mind. Coleridge makes this fact the body of poetry, on which the other qualities depend. "Good sense is the Body of poetic genius, Fancy its Drapery, Motion its Life, and Imagination the Soul that is everywhere, and in each; and forms all into one graceful and intelligent whole."[89] In his "Life of Milton" Johnson calls poetry the art of uniting pleasure with truth, and that, by calling the imagination to the aid of reason. As all art in its highest form appeals to what is best and most permanent in human nature, so it contains in itself also what is most permanently truthful. On account of its specific nature, then, we can say most appropriately of poetry that it gives utterance to that which is eternally true, to the eternal verities of life, though these by the very nature of art are always given in concrete form. Watts-Dunton briefly states the activtiy

87 *Op. cit.*, p. 41.
88 *Standards*, pp. 139-140. New York 1917.
89 *Biographia Literaria*, p. 167. Everyman's Library.

of the poetic artist in his admirable essay on poetry: "With abstractions the poet has nothing to do, save to take them and turn them into concretions; for, as artist, he is simply the man who by instinct embodies in concrete forms that 'universal idea' which Gravina speaks of—that which is essential and elemental in nature and in man; as poetic artist he is simply the man who by instinct chooses for his concrete forms metrical language."[90] These universal truths are present in concrete form in everyday life, and it is not the least merit of the poet, as Brownson eloquently pleads, to indicate this to mankind more strikingly. In this way even purely descriptive poems have their value, contrary to Brownson's statement, for the real poet will externalize only a scene that means something special to him.

The last words of the sentence quoted above refer to the form of poetry and are preceded in the essay on poetry by this definition: "Absolute poetry is the concrete and artistic expression of the human mind in emotional and rhythmical language."[91] Watts-Dunton was a firm believer in the exclusive use of rhythm in poetry, as was Brownson. The latter commends a poet whose works he was reviewing because this poet did 'not appear to have learned that rhythm is unessential to poetry' (xix 338). Rhythm certainly has a definite place in poetry, one that cannot be denied to it. "There is a sympathetic power in measured time which has not yet received the attention it deserves," wrote Emerson long ago;[92] and in *Letters and Social Aims* he says we can easily believe it "to be organic, derived from the human pulse,.....not proper to one nation, but to mankind."[93] Whether we explain rhythm historically with Quiller-Couch, according to whom "verse does precede prose in literature; verse does start with musical accompaniment; musical accompaniment does introduce emotion; and emotion does introduce an order of its own into speech;"[94] or whether we explain it psychologically as "based on the absolute necessity of carrying the lulled spirit of the reader on waves of recurrent sound into a state of sus-

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90 *Poetry and the Renascence of Wonder*, p. 9. New York, (1916).
91 *Op. cit.*, pp. 8-9.
92 *Continental Monthly*, 5: 15.
93 P. 49.
94 *Op. cit.*, pp. 76-7.

pended consciousness"[95]—one thing is certain: rhythm is a most appropriate aid to the expression of emotional, imaginative thought, of thought that soars above the level of ordinary life. Therefore it has its fixed place in poetry.

However, this does not imply that rhythm is the only means of expressing loftier thoughts, as those claim who make it the essential of poetry as an art. The essential of poetry as an art is merely that the form mirror the vision of the author. Beyond this the form has no office. "Indeed, when his diction is richest," says Thompson of Shelley, "nevertheless the poetry so dominates the expression that we only feel the latter as an atmosphere until we are satiated with the former; then we discover with surprise to how imperial a vesture we had been blinded by gazing on the face of his song."[96] If there is to be rhythm in a poem, if the language is to be of the loftiest, the only valid reason can be that such a form expresses most adequately the vision as existing in the mind of the author. An intuition must be present to determine the form, and the puerile conceits or flimsy sentiments condemned by Brownson, even if their exterior form is perfect, do not fulfill the requirements of higher art. "We want design," Emerson writes, "and do not forgive the bards if they have only the art of enameling."[97] From the intimate connection between content and form it follows that no condemnation of any new kind of poetry, on the ground that it breaks the conventions of form, can be taken seriously. Whether the Imagists will finally stand the test of art depends on their content. The Imagist poetry must be taken for what it is intended. The critic must see what the form reveals to him. If the content revealed has the marks of more than ordinary intuitional powers, then he is in the presence of real artistic activity, and he next proceeds to weigh this content for its value or meaning to mankind. If his favorable judgment is confirmed by men after him, then the work is true art beyond a doubt. But if the form of work should fail to reveal any content worth while to mankind, the first requisite of art is wanting. Some say that the term poetry is to be applied only to the conventional rhythmical composition. Then, of

95 *North American Review*, 204: 440.
96 *Op. cit.*, iii, 31.
97 *Op. cit.*, p. 37.

course, vers libre is not poetry, but this alone affords no basis for denying that vers libre is a species of art.

Closely allied to the question of language is that of spontaneity, and the two are frequently almost made identical. The question of simple language, ornate, etc., depends on the intuition, as we said before. Even Wordsworth was better aware of this than many critics allow. His plea for simple language was directed against the over-wrought diction of a false classicism; his plea for the language of the ordinary man was at least in part a plea for the language naturally prompted by the different moods of a man's mind. And his main error was rather that the moods of the poet, artificial to some extent, cannot rise to the height of language prompted spontaneously by real moods:

> But, whatever portion of this faculty we may suppose even the greatest Poet to possess, there cannot be a doubt but that the language which it will suggest to him, must often, in liveliness and truth, fall far short of that which is uttered by men in real life, under the actual pressure of those passions, certain shadows of which the Poet thus produces, or feels to be produced, in himself.....No words, which his fancy or imagination can suggest, will be to be compared with those which are the emanations of reality and truth.[98]

The question with him was one of fact rather than of principle. Poetic language is the spontaneous outflow of the intuition. The more full and detailed the internal expression of the intuition is, the more spontaneously will the language flow forth. Where details have been carefully thought out, the traces of labor must be invisible, else the harmony between content and form is marred. In this sense we can agree with Shelley in his appeal to the greatest poets of his day "whether it is not an error to assert that the finest pasages of poetry are produced by labour and study." But Shelley goes further than this when he says: "Poets are the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration; the mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present; the words which express what they understand not."[99] Spontaneity, in the sense of a blind externalization of any intuition regardless of consequences,

98 Preface, *Op. cit.*, x, 18-19.
99 *Op. cit.*, pp. 39, 46.

Brownson rightly repudiates. The poet is always a man and not free from the common laws of rational nature. We cannot agree with Croce when he claims that the artist cannot be blamed for the externalization of his intuitions despite the fact that he chooses from among them. This claim no more holds good for poetry that it does for art in general. If no intuitions of a nature wholesome to mankind present themselves, the poet can refrain altogether from externalizing. The vast influence his art has on the human race, makes it doubly incumbent upon the poet to weigh well his intuition according to all the laws of humanity and reason before deciding to impart it to his fellowmen.

In speaking of the novel Brownson considered it necessary to justify himself by pointing to the good that this form of literature may produce (xix 305, 460). The novel has always been in bad repute with some classes of serious-minded men, who point to the many abuses connected with it. Thus Coleridge said of novels:

> Of the last, and of the perusal of them, I will run the risk of asserting, that where the reading of novels prevails as a habit, it occasions in time the entire destruction of the powers of the mind: it is such an utter loss to the reader, that it is not so much to be called pass-time as kill-time. It conveys no trustworthy information as to facts; it produces no improvement of the intellect, but fills the mind with a mawkish and morbid sensibility, which is directly hostile to the cultivation, invigoration, and enlargement of the nobler faculties of the understanding."[100]

This is certainly a sweeping denunciation of the novel. Even if it is oftener true than not, the fault lies not in the novel as such but in the manner in which this form of literature is employed by writers. Brownson could not go so far as this, for he recognized too clearly the good use that the novel could be made to serve, the powerful strides it could make towards the mission of literature in general. This possibility is inherent in the novel particularly, since it deals most directly and immediately with all the phases of social life. We cannot, however, agree with Brownson altogether when he claims that in-

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100 *Essays and Lectures on Shapespeare*, p. 390. Everymans' Library.

struction and a good story are incompatible, unless by instruction he means direct dogmatism. When Brownson explains himself further by calling any novel with a theory or tendency permeating it, which the story is to illustrate or advance, inartistic, he is contradicting flatly what he claims as the mission of literature. Such a novel will be inartistic only in so far as it departs from the paths of art and thrusts its theories to the surface in the form of propaganda. But this is not at all necessary. Every concrete picture of life is the expression of some philosophy of life. And if the artist's intuition contains some special view of life, he cannot but embody that in his novel. All that is required is to be true to art, to externalize in such a way that the concrete form naturally mirrors this mental vision. The mistake often made is the introduction into novels of too much direct dogmatism, the presence of too much of the philosophical treatise; or an artificial forcing of facts to fit a theory—we do not say to fit an intuition because the latter is always expressed as a concrete vision, else it is not capable of externalization after the manner of art.

The readiness with which the novel affords special opportunities for the expression of sentiment is a source of temptation that is succumbed to only too often. Novels will be art if they are the natural expression of an artistic vision. But, as in all art, the classification as good or bad will depend on whether the appeal is made to what is low or high in human nature; and the merit and value will depend on the loftiness of aspirations with which the novels naturally imbue the mind of the reader. Art as such cannot exclude love or any other phase of human life from the novel. But the dictates of common sense, the laws of humanity, will exclude the portrayal of sentiments in any manner that is injurious to the higher nature of man. Unfortunately, only too many of our novels, if they do nothing worse, are saturated with that impassioned love of which Chateaubriand says: "This first kind of love is neither as pure as conjugal affection, nor as graceful as the sentiment of the shepherd, but fiercer than either; it ravages the soul in which it reigns. Resting neither upon the gravity of marriage nor upon the innocence of rural manners, and blending no other spells with its own, it becomes its own illusion, its own

insanity, its own substance."[101] The whole question is solvable by applying the general principles unfolded above.

Whenever Brownson comes to speak of the religious novel, he grows impatient, as we can see from the appelation of 'literary hybrid' or 'literary monstrosity,' which he applies to it. Brownson claimed that the interest in the religious novel is divided between two spheres, the natural and the supernatural. But he acknowledged the compatibility of the two; and his condemnation of the religious novel resulted rather from the fact, as he saw it, that no specimens of it actually were successful or commendable. They were failures either in their story or in their controversy. Even if we should grant this failure, it is taking a long stride to conclude that there should be no novels in which the religious element finds open expression, that the religious element is to be present only in the spirit pervading the work. The religious element is a fact in life. It can enter into the intuition of an artist just as well as any other fact and often forms a strong element of human interest when rightly portrayed. However, it must always be remembered that the religious novel is primarily a novel, a species of literary art, and that the religious element therefore is not so much a purpose, a matter of propaganda, as an integral part of the intuition of the author. No reason can be assigned for excluding any artistic vision of which this element forms a part. Bagehot says:

> Men who purchase a novel do not wish a stone or a sermon. All lengthened reflections must be omitted; the whole armoury of pulpit eloquence. But no delineation of human nature can be considered complete which omits to deal with man in relation to the questions which occupy him as man, with his convictions as to the theory of the universe and his own destiny; the human heart throbs on few subjects with a passion so intense, so peculiar, and so typical. From an artistic view, it is a blunder to omit an element which is so characteristic of human life, which contributes so much to its animation, and which is so picturesque.[102]

To say that every picture of life is faulty that does not make

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101 *Op. cit.*, p. 272.
102 *Op. cit.*, ii, 158.

positive mention of the religious element would be going too far. But it is equally faulty to say that the religious element has no place in the novel.

History, in the sense explained by Brownson as something more than the mere chronicle of facts, also belongs in part to the domain of literary art—in part, because the facts as such are not dependent on any artistic inspiration but the results of scientific investigation. Thus in history, as Quiller-Couch says, the extremes of art and science meet and seem to conflict; history written in a colorless way will hardly "interest men in human doings." It will attract only the student.[103] The general public looks not only for the truth, but for the truth told in a pleasing way. In popularizing history, however, there is great danger of losing the atmosphere of the people and the places that characterized the past; there is frequently, though not necessarily, a conflict between accuracy and imagination.

From the standponit of literature and art, the chief demand of history is that the facts be presented as a whole; that a theory, intuition, or mental attitude, run through them and combine them; that the element of human interest be present; and that the form be an adequate mirror of the whole. To be true history at the same time, this mental attitude must of course arise out of the facts, not to be thrust upon them; while common ethics, too, will demand that the attitude be not one of false principles. But whether the underlying thread be merely that of natural cause and effect, or a higher metaphysical speculation, will matter little from the standpoint of art. All that can be said is that in the latter supposition the work may assume the nature of a philosophical treatise and thus pass out of the sphere of art. Metaphysical speculations should probably be left out of all writing that purports to be mere history; not, as Brownson argues, because of the possible danger of a false theory, but rather because else the work would be a philosophy of history instead of simple history.

5.—Criticism

No one will refuse to agree with Brownson when he says that a criticism of form without reference to content is not sufficient, if the content is an essential feature of art. At the same

103 *Op. cit.*, pp. 282-3.

time Brownson disparages the form too much, even if he says that viewed in its proper relation everything is important in a piece of writing. We have seen that the proper relation of the form is that it express adequately the content—so much so, that the content has no value except in as far as it is revealed through the form present to the reader. The content is therefore the prime consideration of the critic, but only the content as revealed through the form, so that the latter also becomes a matter of highest importance. Due to the different mental attitudes assumed by critics, criticism has had many offices to perform. "When Coleridge writes a criticism of Shakespeare," says Arthur Symons, "he is giving us his deepest philosophy,.....Criticism with Goethe is a part of his view of the world, his judgment of human nature, and of society. With Pater, criticism is quickened meditation; with Matthew Arnold, a form of moral instruction."[104] To such a type of criticism Brownson often subscribed in practice, since for him criticism was frequently an occasion for expressing his own views on the topics to hand. He had no patience with those who examined the mental states of the author or his biography and did little more. This is generally called psychological criticism, and like historical criticism, which examines the historical background, has value only in so far as it throws some light on the work examined. But it is not a criticism of the work itself, only an auxiliary to that end. Likewise was the examination of the personal emotions of the critic on reading a work, impressionistic criticism, repudiated by Brownson when offered as the whole estimate of a work. This form of criticism has come much into vogue, and bears with it some good, in as far as every work of art has a personal value to the beholder. However, it easily develops into what Mr. Balfour calls "a kind of anarchy of individual judgment," and too readily leaves out of consideration that there is a common bond in human nature and that the individual peculiarities, when not guided by this common bond, often turn into the eccentric.

When Brownson advises the critic to examine the purpose of the author and then test the content of the work in the light of this purpose, he seems to us to be reversing the proper meth-

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104 Introduction to Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*, p. ix.

od of procedure. After all, the most important consideration is the work itself as it is given out to the public. This the critic should examine as he finds it. He should ascertain for himself what the work reveals to him. The purpose of the author, if not revealed in the work, has no value for the critic, except perhaps to help him understand anything that was not clear at first. The point of importance is not so much the success with which the author has gained an end, as the success with which the work itself reveals its nature. Nor should we as a last step ascertain the beauty and taste with which the author has attained his end. The primary end of the work is the expression of a content. With this expression of the content are immediately connected all the qualities that the work has, and these must to some extent be apparent at first sight, at least to those that have the requisite knowledge.

The first step of the critic, then, regards art in its first phase, as an artistic activity. It examines the success with which the external expression reveals an inutition, and assigns a value to the work in accordance with the degree in which the intuition transcends the intuitional powers of the ordinary man. Thus the critic, like the reader, reverses the process of the artist, and reads out of the form the intuition put into it by him. When the rank as a work of artistic intuition is ascertained, the critic proceeds to examine the probable effect of the work. He tries to discern the amount of human interest it contains, how much it will appeal to mankind; and then weighs the value of the content in the light of all that is best and noblest in life, thus ascertaining the spiritual worthiness of the work.

Hence it is evident that the critic must approach his task with a disinterested spirit, free from prejudices. "Never begin an author, a real author I mean, in a critical spirit," is the advice Brownson gives to his son. This undesirable 'critical spirit' includes the belief in the rigidity of conventional art forms. For the critic must be ever open-minded, and ready to judge any new attempts of different artists on their own merit. In order to separate the permanent and the essential in a work of art from the unimportant and the ephemeral, it is most necessary for the critic to have a profound knowledge of, and sympathy with, human nature, and a far-seeing judgment; else

his work as critic has no *raison d'être*. "One novel will be praised on the ground that it has a moral purpose," writes E. R. Still, "another on the ground.....that it has not a moral purpose; one on the ground that it paints actual facts from life, another on the ground that it depicts an ideal world; etc."[105] This is true of all art. The final judgment on it is the outcome of a balance of circumstances and considerations, sometimes conflicting ones. And the critic, to pass a judgment of weight, must in a sense anticipate time, be himself a kind of personification of universal human nature. Only then will his office have any value for his fellowmen, only then will his fellowmen profit by his utterances and find in them a fairly safe guide towards the permanent values of life.

105 *The Prose of E. R. Still*, p. 133. Boston 1900.

CONCLUSION

It is somewhat unfortunate that the nature of our task demanded a critical survey of the different theories advanced in the first part of this dissertation. The impression such a survey will leave behind is quite different from that which a mere appreciation of the value of Brownson's critical writings would have given. We say 'unfortunate,' because we are thus forced to read into these writings a system of critical principles and of aesthetics which Brownson most probably never formulated for himself as a whole. Moreover the constructive portions of the criticism have to a great extent only the weight of the writer's personal opinion, as is the case with so many essays on art, and some of the opposition to Brownson's theories rests therefore merely on personal views. If Brownson had set down for himself a complete set of aesthetic and critical principles and had taken such a system for his point of departure, then he would be indeed accountable for the ideas underlying every critical statement he made, and blameworthy in the greatest degree for any contradictions that statements made at different times might involve.

But just these contradictions—they are rather exaggerations of different viewpoints—shows us something of Brownson the man; namely, the absorbing enthusiasm with which he pursued any cause that he thought worth pursuing, and which seemed to control his entire being at such moments. Then, the views we have unfolded point on the one hand to a reaction in Brownson against that phase of Transcendentalism which almost deified external nature, while on the other hand a second phase of it, the doctrine of God's revealing Himself immediately to the mind in intuition, apparently stuck to him at all times, and influenced much of his thinking. His concern for the betterment of society and for the uplift of the lower classes shows him to have been fully alive to the justice of the agitations going on in the United States and especially in England at his time. He was not satisfied with reveling in abstract theories, however, and earnestly pleaded for practical application, an example of which we see in his sociological concep-

tion of literature. In his views on religion and morality we see the descendant of the austere, religious New Englander of the century before. Brownson had been brought up away from city life; and he thus inherited all the deep anxiety of the early settlers regarding the future life, and received from them the deep conviction that the religious question is paramount and that it is one of continuous concern and interest.

One feature of the critical views of Brownson, which the nature of our work did not allow us to emphasize as we would really like to do, we shall again mention by way of a departing word, though we risk repeating ourselves. Brownson ever stood up firmly for anything he considered to be most conducive to the good of mankind. In denouncing the writings which he thought subversive of the good of man, he knew no fear, and his zeal for his cause often resulted in statements that were over-stressed and exaggerated. His outstanding viewpoint was that of literature as a powerful agent in moulding the thought of readers. He recognized keenly the living force of the written word, its permanent and wide-spread influence for good or evil. For this Brownson cannot be commended too much. This side of literature is only too often not merely neglected but spurned and ridiculed. As a consequence so many theories of literature—as of art—spring up, which regard almost altogether the form; and art is thus given the freest scope to indulge in all possible sentiments and sensations. Such theories confound enlightenment with untrammeled barbarism of the spirit, and do not succeed in gaining the appreciation for art that is really desired by its votaries. If art is to lift man for the time being out of the confinement of daily routine, and give him higher enjoyments, these must be able to satisfy the higher cravings of the soul, for it is the soul that looks to art for relief and enjoyment. How far from its mark, then, that art lies which under the plea of doing service to the mind of man injects into this mind the poisons that kill its higher life! Would that all critics, and not only some, could catch the spirit of Brownson, and that all writers would have before their eyes continually the sublime position that real art occupies in the life of man!

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